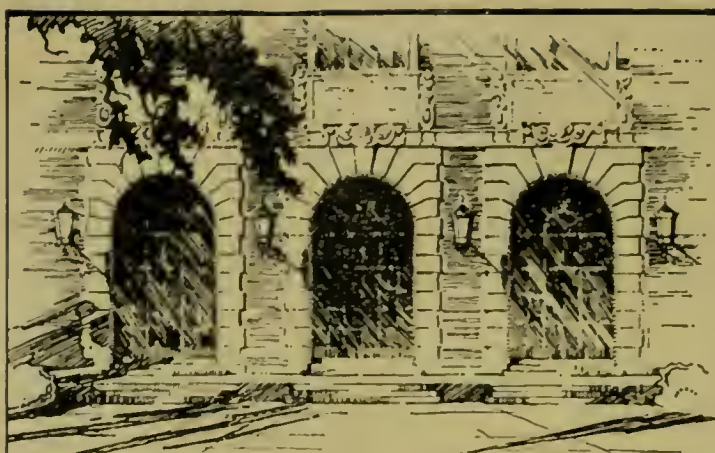




*Agnew of Lochnaw,
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LA BELLE MARIE.

A Romance.

BY THE AUTHOR

OF

“SMUGGLERS AND FORESTERS,” “LEWELL PASTURES,”
“THE EARL’S CEDARS,” &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

L. BOOTH, 307, REGENT STREET, W.

1862.

LONDON :
STRANGEWAYS AND WALDEN, PRINTERS,
28, Castle St. Leicester Sq.

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LA BELLE MARIE.

CHAPTER I.

MORGAN PRICE, the spirited young landlord of the Boscawen Arms, showed no signs of intending to give way to the violent opposition raised against him, when, with a ship-load of goods, he returned to Lezant. The bullies on the quay, who had threatened the absent man, drew back when they saw, in the undaunted glance and firm bearing of the ex-sailor, that he was not in a humour to stand joking. The new furniture and stores of groceries and spirits, which he had brought with him from Swansea, were carried into the house, without a hand being lifted by the townspeople, either in aid or animosity.

“Cowards, one and all!” said Morgan, contemptuously; when his wife, half disposed to be angry with him for the utter disregard

he had paid to her advice, received him almost regretfully. "Cheer up, my lass! we shall carry the day yet. There's not one of them dares stand up and face me! They may snarl, like illnature'd curs that run after boys and girls, or snap at your heels; but just let a man turn round and shy a stone, or lift a stick, or even his fist, they run away. Would you have me shut up the inn, and lose all that we have laid out upon it, for fear of a parcel of idle beggars, who have not pluck to go through with their own wicked intentions?"

"Oh, not now—not in broad daylight—this is not their time; but who is to secure us against fire at night, or perhaps murder? I don't think I could bear an autumn and winter in this place," said his wife, sadly. "I am sorry you brought all these things, Morgan. I doubt whether we shall have custom enough to make it pay. Scarce any one has been here lately, and this should be our best season."

"Well, you had some company that might have been spared, while I was away. I hope that canting old Methodist has not been here again? He will not show his face at this door, now that I am come back. The trick won't answer with me, as well as it did with you! Can't you see that the people at the

Three Crowns want to get rid of us? Mother Brock would never have let her husband set foot in this house, unless it suited her purpose. Depend upon it, she put it into his head to come here. He has been childish, and hardly able to move from his own fireside, these twenty years: she must have known what he was going to do; and, very likely, the tale he told you about the men having determined to knock me on the head, was just a threat intended to frighten us out of the place. I won't say that the old fellow himself did not mean it kindly."

"I am certain he thought you were in great danger, and I believe he knows these hill-folk better than you do. He is old and feeble, but shrewd enough sometimes; and Doctor Lawrence considered his warning well worth attention. However, now you have bought all these new things; we must make the best of it, and stay awhile where we are. What did your uncle say to your making so many purchases? Did you show him my letter, and tell him that, after all, we might soon be driven out of the place?"

"No! I never admitted the possibility of such a misfortune," answered Price. "I told him that you were frightened, and that the people in Lezant were an awkwardish lot to deal with; but that I had no doubt

whatever a trade, briskly and honestly carried on, as I meant our business to be, would prosper; and he quite agreed with me, and promised to back me. He will take off our hands any goods that we don't consume; and, in short, will be, as he has been all my life through, a good friend to me. That is all I want: the rest I must do for myself, with you to help me. So pluck up a heart, and let's set to work, and smarten up the place a bit! You have not half looked at the new papers. The passages at the back of the house must be dry enough, now, to put them up."

Mrs. Price tried to banish her fears, and was soon absorbed in admiration of her husband's new purchases. Morgan, like most sailors, was very handy; and, for the next week, he was hard at work, with her assistance, putting up curtains, and papering the walls, which had been left to dry during the early summer. Nothing whatever occurred to disturb them, except the gradual and steady influx of custom, attracted by the neat appearance of the place, and the civil manners of its host and hostess. Both set their shoulders steadily to the wheel, and found it revolve easily. The timid woman had no leisure to think of future danger; and the cheery sound of Price's voice, as he hammered away at her new shelves and cup-

boards, talking to the children, who were as busy as bees, dispelled her apprehensions.

He had done all that a sensible man could do, to obtain popularity and secure a footing in Lezant. All the more respectable inhabitants—unfortunately, they were but few—patronised the Boscawen Arms. The Three Crowns was certainly gone down in repute since the discovery made by Lieutenant Osborne, and his seizure of smuggled goods on the premises. Mr. St. Erme had forbidden his niece's visiting the old publican. Lord Boscawen's steward, to whom Morgan's uncle had written, renewed his assurance that, if any alteration were made in the manner of receiving the rents, the court should be held at the Boscawen Arms. Meanwhile, he did not hesitate to promise all the support in his power to the respectable young couple, who had set up in opposition to the Brocks in Lezant town. He should be at the place himself, in the course of a week or two, and would make a point of calling at the new inn.

Mrs. Price rubbed her new tables till they shone like mirrors, in expectation of the arrival of the steward, who was almost as great a man as his absent master. For nearly fifty years he had managed the property, and time had not diminished his zeal and acute-

ness. The Boscawen family placed in him the most implicit trust.

With his lordship's interest so much at heart as was universally acknowledged to be the case, Mr. Hearnshaw must have thought it desirable, on fitting occasions, to inspect personally the Manor Farm; yet there was no portion of the estate which he so seldom visited. A very considerable degree of excitement prevailed at Woods, on the morning when Mr. Helier received the steward's letter, announcing his intended arrival.

Since the nocturnal visit of Jacob Mohr, Mr. Helier had been even less attentive than usual to the business of the farm. The rotation of crops, drainage, and the condition of the stock, did not, however, appear to be considerations of paramount importance with the steward; although, as he walked over the land, he made a few pertinent observations, which showed him to be alive to the defects of the system pursued at Woods. He did not seem to wish to find fault, and averted his eyes as much as possible from the weedy pastures and ill-kept fences, which allowed the poorly-fed cattle to wander pretty much at will. When he found it absolutely necessary to suggest an amendment, Mr. Helier always agreed with him. Neither party was desirous to put difficulties in the way.

Perhaps age had, in some measure, blunted his faculties, for the old steward had passed, long ago, the threescore years and ten allotted to man by the Psalmist. He was still, however, hale and vigorous, with a keen eye, and a form more unbent than that of the much younger man who walked beside him. He might be treasuring up discoveries to be made available when the time suited him better; or he might have learned, in the course of a long life, to be tolerant of deficiencies, when, on some important point, the person with whom he had to deal was capable of rendering greater service to himself or his employer than others could afford in the same capacity.

The Helier girls peeped at the formidable stranger from behind the projections of the old walls. There was an expression in their father's countenance, when he accidentally caught sight of his daughters, mopping and mowing like idiots at the aged steward, which frightened them, and prevented their playing any tricks upon his guest. They ran back to Reine, who was sitting working in the orchard, to tell her how civil their father was to the steward. It might have been his lordship, he was making such a fuss with him.

Even in broad daylight it was not without a shudder that, at Mr. Hearnshaw's request, after going back to the house, Helier crossed

the threshold of the haunted room. It was years since he had entered that cool, spacious chamber. The arras waving in the wind, the grim old pictures, daunted him. The steward, fortunately, needed no guide. He stepped in first, leaving the shivering, sickening victim of superstitious terrors standing on the doorstep.

“Ha! you have kept order here. I see no sign of dust or cobwebs. Has any one occupied this room of late? There used to be some unpleasant stories about it. I myself once passed an uncomfortable night here,” said the steward, looking round complacently; while Helier stared in surprise at the open windows and vestiges of fire in the grate. The room certainly bore tokens of having been recently used.

“I am not aware that any one has slept here lately; but it is not well to neglect any part of an old house like this. My stepson’s apartments are not distant. His is not a timid nature. We are not very cordial in our relations. Lance Fleming has, perhaps, chosen to occupy this bedchamber.”

“I should scarcely think it likely,” said the old man, drily. “For him, more than others, there are unpleasant associations connected with this room. Is he at home now? Can I speak with him?”

Helier hesitated. "He is, and he is not. I know nothing of his movements. He is here to-day and gone to-morrow. Shall we pass on?"

Not yet. I have not quite done with this room. Listen to me, Mr. Helier. It is possible there may come here persons curious to examine this old building, which, after all, is not much better than a ruin. Remember, that must not be. It would not please Lord Boscawen that, to gratify the love of sight-seeing, the Grange should be shown."

"Of course not — unquestionably! No person would take such a liberty. Indeed — *pardonnez moi!* — this place has a bad name. Few would care to stand where we are now. These woods are very generally avoided. His lordship, though I confess myself to be an indifferent tenant, might find some difficulty in filling my place, were it vacated."

"Oh, we want no changes! His lordship is perfectly satisfied. I shall have great pleasure in making a most satisfactory report," said the old man, speaking rapidly and decidedly, while he moved about the room, opening and shutting doors and windows, which, seldom moved, reverberated and clattered; and walking with sounding steps over the oak flooring.

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* *qu'est-ce que c'est?* —

voyez!—écoutez!” exclaimed his affrighted companion, as the steward, without warning, pushed back a panel in the wainscot at the foot of the bed, displaying a yawning cavity from whose deepest recesses a rustling sound was heard, while fluttering silken draperies were indistinctly seen within, waving in the wind.

“Yes! those were hers. I remember quite well the look of the French sacks and farthingales. I can fancy I see her now. How well preserved these things are! There is not a sign of damp. But do you hear nothing?”

Both the men listened—Helier, pale with horror—to the sound of footsteps receding at a distance.

“Rats behind the arras, eh? Don’t be frightened. I told you this chamber had been occupied. Inform me, my good friend, who is your guest?”

“Upon my soul!—bonté de Dieu!—I have no friend, no guest. No living soul, to my knowledge, has passed this threshold lately,” said Helier. “I did not even guess that this panel concealed an aperture. This is new to me. I am a stranger, it appears, chez moi.”

“Ah, you have not lived so long as I have, to be surprised at that!” said the steward, coolly passing, as he spoke, into the space

behind the wainscot, and examining it narrowly. "It is very dark here. Have you no means of striking a light at hand?"

"I cannot get a light without leaving you," said Helier. "You would not like to remain here all alone?"

"Why not?" asked the intrepid old man, his eyes twinkling in the darkness. "Bah! I am not afraid of the French lady's ghost. I, for one, do not believe that she came to her end by unfair means. Get me a light, I pray you."

Helier turned to go out, but stumbled over his little daughter at the entrance of the passage. "Ah, imp of darkness!" he shouted, half mad with terror, and grasping her by the hair, "I have you now! What is this?—Zélie! Mauvaise enfant! Que fais-tu ici?"

"Rien, mon papa! — Ah! — I was only waiting to see Lance come out, and then to peep at the sick man he has been shut up with."

"Lance! were those his steps, then?" muttered her father, "Who is with him? Can it be Mohr? Go, mon enfant!" he added, in a milder tone, "there is no harm done — the pain will soon be over. I did not mean to hurt you. Vite! alerte! run and fetch me a light."

The little girl, glad to be released, ran nimbly away. Helier shook from his hand

with disgust a quantity of the child's fair hair which he had pulled out during his agony of terror.

The steward was still engaged in an earnest search after some unexplained object, when Helier took him the light. As he handed it into the recess, he saw that the fluttering robes which rustled in the strong draught of air, and no doubt added to the mysterious reputation of the chamber by their eerie sound, were made of costly foreign silk, antique in fashion and design, but scarcely injured, as it seemed, by time, — so dry was their hiding-place.

“Were those Madame Fleming's dresses?” said the pale, terrified man, eying them with curiosity. “Why, they must have hung there these fifty years! It is a wonder they hold together.”

“If they were brought out into the daylight, you would see that the silk is rotten and discoloured. Let them be! The darkness suits them,” said Mr. Hearnshaw, plunging his hand, as he spoke, into the deep pockets worn formerly by the French lady. He then carefully examined, with the aid of the light, various niches in the wall, but without finding what he wanted.

“She must have taken them to France with her,” he said, as he emerged from the

cavity. "My Lord," he added, speaking to Helier, "has lately been disturbed respecting some papers of importance which were supposed to have been burned at the time of the great fire, when the stables and other parts of the building were destroyed. It was just possible they might be hidden in these rooms, but I see no traces of anything of the kind. Should any documents relating to the Boscawen family be discovered, let them be carefully preserved, and shown — I need hardly enjoin so respectable a tenant — to none but me."

Mr. Helier promised obedience. As they left the room, a hollow, startling sound again made him tremble. "It is nothing but an old owl," said the steward. "I saw its eyes shine yonder, and it has flown out through the secret passage. There is a communication between the closet where Madame hung her dresses and the old chapel. I have seen her come that way, sweeping the ground with the rustling robes that now serve for the spiders to swing their webs from. These are the ghostly horrors which affect timid imaginations!"

The old man's contemptuous tone was lost on Helier. He was as pale as death, and scarcely able to stand.

"I tell you, this is an awful place," he

faltered. "Ah, you are brave, now!—you laugh—you are one infidel!—but sleep in this house, night after night; hear how they chatter—yes, in my own tongue, too—that poor Frenchwoman and her babies!—and you would talk very differently. Over and over again, I have made up my mind to give up the farm, and seek my fortunes elsewhere."

"Oh, come, nonsense! That would not suit my Lord. We could not afford to lose so excellent a tenant," said the steward, coaxingly. "Your nerves are not strong; you have over-worked yourself. You should lie by a little, like your land—that croft I told you to leave in fallow. Now, then, we have done with our inspection, and I shall be glad to accept your hospitable offers of refreshment."

As they passed on they came to the door of Lance's chamber, which stood open. There was no sign of present occupation. The bed did not appear to have been slept in for some time, and the room had a cold, uninhabited air.

"Ah, I expected to find your son-in-law at home," said the steward. "I counted upon seeing him. He is a distant connexion, you know, of my Lord, who was once attached to his father. I should have been glad to make his acquaintance. He has never been at the Grange when I have come here."

“Lance is seldom here,” said Helier, looking, however, with some surprise into the evidently unoccupied room. “I thought I saw him yesterday: but he is a vaurien—a mauvais sujet—always in mischief!—I wash my hands of him completely.”

A sort of hollow laugh followed his words, coming, neither of the men exactly knew whence, but seeming to be in the air of the empty chamber. After all, it might only have been old Leah, filling her jar of bran from the sack in the closet. Helier did not speak, but quickly left the room, accompanied by the steward, who rather led than was guided by his trembling host through the empty, echoing passages and halls of the ancient Grange.

CHAPTER II.

“LEND a hand, Lance!—Mister Fleming, I mean. This chap can’t help hisself a bit; there’s no life left in him, and nothing’s harder to lift than a corpse. I’m none so steady on my pins, seeing one of them was growed in an oak-copse. Mother must have bought it a bargain. It’s none of my timbers.”

“Hush, you blockhead! keep your distance. I’ve no mind to come near you. Poor fellow! it would be better for him if he were dead, than dragged about in that fashion. Now, if you had a flask of spirits in your pocket, it might be useful; but it would be sure to be empty. Set him down, I say!”

The two men paused, panting with the struggle it had cost them to bear through the bushes the tall, athletic form, now pillowed senseless on the hard rock. Lance bent over the pallid countenance, to see whether life was indeed extinct.

“No, no! he’s not dead,” he said, joy-

fully. "Though he cannot speak, he could feel that last jolt you gave him — clumsy dog! He has talked fast enough these three nights I have sat up with him — lightheaded, raving about the schooner — wishing himself aboard her. What on earth are we to do with him? He can't stop all night among these bushes. He wants help and woman's tending, though I don't think I've nursed him badly."

"Best get him down to the shore, if we can," said Andrew Brock. "There's a boat in the cove, and we might pull round the headlands after dusk. It won't be long before we have the schooner back again. Take my word for it, he'll not be well till he has the planks of the French Mary under his feet. He might be in worse hands, meantime, than my old mother's. For a gun-shot wound or a fever, I'd match her against any doctor in this part o' the country."

The men set their burden down again, when, after twenty minutes' hard walking, they had pushed their way through the choked-up ravine to the Keeve. Lance filled his cap with water, and bathed with a woman's gentleness the sunken temples of the weather-beaten visage, on which insensibility had set its seal. Gradually, a faint tinge of colour returned to the cheeks, and the heavy eyelids

unclosed; but still the senses of the sufferer wandered.

“Cast a rope out!—Jean!—I say, Gervase, old messmates, what’s all this water? Don’t you see I’m drowning, that you haven’t given me a spar to cling to? I’m sick of the roaring there is in my ears, and the green waves see-sawing up and down, like the hills and hollows by Kingley Bottom!”

“That is just the way he went on last night,” said Lance, anxiously, when the man was again quiet. “Always fancying himself in the water, and calling to his messmates to save him. It was awful to hear him. I thought the whole house would have been afoot; but no one stirred more than the dead. Yet they must have heard him.”

“Folks had best lie close in such a house as yours, master,” said Andrew. “For my part, all the yelling and screeching under heaven would not bring my nose from under the sheets, if I slept at Boscawen’s Grange; which I’ve not yet done, nor don’t intend it. Best not inquire too sharply what such noises might be. It’s broad daylight now, even among these plaguy thorn-trees;—I’m not afraid. Shall we gag him? He’s at it again.”

“No, no! I’ll not have him hurt. There’s scarce breath enough in his body,

one would think, to make such a disturbance," said Lance, as the delirious seaman uttered shriek upon shriek. "Now, lift him;—easy, my lad, easy!" he continued, when the sick man's head drooped on his chest as the violent fever-fit passed off. "I don't see anything better we can do for him than carry him to the beach, and put off by water. It was folly to bring him here. Best let him wait at Lezant for the schooner."

"Aye, aye! She's sure to be in the creek soon, spite of all the Revenue cutters in Christendom," said Andrew. "Mother's got a'most a clear cellar: we're out of spirits, and spices, and tobacco, and you don't suppose we'd make shift with such rubbish as serves the folk at the Boscawen. I tell you, we'll have the place choke full of goods that will be worth harbouring, before the summer's past."

"Well, I hope you will take better care of La Belle Marie's next cargo than you did of the last," said Lance, once more shouldering his burthen. "Who would have fancied that old fool, Hearnshaw, would give us so much trouble? No one ever took the pains before of ferreting out the secrets of this old house. Why, he knew of places that I thought nobody but myself ever crept into; and could lay his hand on the knobs of the

drawers in the French lady's cabinet as if he had been her tirewoman! I thought our man was safe in that dark hole, if anywhere."

The voices of Lance and his companion died away in the thicket; and nothing was heard but the rustling of the branches and the flowing of the water that rushed swiftly through the ravine.

Meanwhile, in a part of the old Grange far removed from the ghost-chamber, but in its appearance more comfortless, Mrs. Helier was spending alone the long hours of the day, which was still that of the steward's visit. This woman had no means of employing herself. When younger and fairer, her thoughts and leisure had been chiefly occupied with the care of decorating her pretty person; but now she shrank from the sight of her own altered face in the glass, and seldom opened the chests brought from her own home in Sussex, wherein her bridal finery had almost ever since remained stowed away.

The two windows of her bed-room looked into the farmyard, which came close up to the back of the house. Now and then, a lad or lass might be seen going about their work—not briskly, for life was not very active at the Manor Farm, but with more cheerfulness than was visible elsewhere on those dull premises.

The cows were coming in to be milked this afternoon, and Mrs. Helier was standing at the window watching them, with a weary look in her face. She had no love for country pleasures and rural toil, though she had lived all her life at farms where such employments were carried on. When she saw her husband and the old steward come into the yard, she turned away, and walked up and down the room with slow, dragging steps. She was not shod in silk or satin, and her shoes creaked, though they were thin and nearly worn out. The oak flooring, too, groaned, as she went from end to end of the chamber. Then, again, she stood near the window, but a little behind the curtain, looking out at the visitor.

Of late, she had disliked seeing strangers, and, yet more, any person who, having known her formerly, could contrast her present faded appearance with the blooming beauty of which she had been so proud. Her dress, formerly her chief thought, was now careless to untidiness: the colours, dim and dull, were unbecoming to her sickly complexion. The cheerless room, furnished in the style of a common farm-house, and manifesting no taste and little neatness in its arrangement, was quite in character with the broken-spirited

slattern, 'staring listlessly through the dim panes, half-hidden by the torn curtain.

A light tap was heard at the door, but Mrs. Helier did not speak or move, though the sound was repeated. It was like a gleam of sunshine stealing into a vault, when the bright face of Reine looked in upon her.

“Pardon!” she said; “but you have been alone all day. Leah says you have eaten nothing. She is afraid you are ill. May I stay and keep you company? I cannot find the children: there is no one in the house. It is dull for me, too, below stairs.”

“Stay, if you like,” answered Mrs. Helier, softened by this appeal to her compassion. “I remember thinking this house dull enough when I was as young as you are, though I was married, and had my baby to amuse me. Where is Lance?”

“Who knows?” answered Reine, shrugging her shoulders. “He has taken himself quite away. No one sees him. Ah!” she said, coming nearer to the window, “you have the cows to look at, but they are all red; and they are not lively, like our Norman cows, which are prettily shaped, and striped black, white, dun colour: there is an endless variety. See! that is the intendant—steward,

I mean—surveying the cattle: Monsieur—what is his name?”

“Hearnshaw,” Mrs. Fleming said, with an effort. “It is a long time since I saw him. He is aged, but not greatly altered. He must be a very old man. I thought him so when I first came here, five-and-twenty years ago; yet the time which lies like lead upon my shoulders, seems hardly to have told with him. I wonder whether it is the same with my Lord? They were boys together.”

Reine had never heard so many words fall from the lips of her hostess. Mrs. Fleming stood at the window, looking down into the yard, but carried back in idea, by the sight of the steward's face, to the first years of her marriage.

“I did not like him then, and it is the same now. There are some people and places one never can fancy. I was certain, when I first came to Woods, that this country was not to my taste; and I have never liked it—no, never! If I could show you the place where I was born—one of the Duke's farms—you never saw such trees! Here, one is choked up with ill-grown timber, but you would never find such oaks and beeches as grew on that land—yes! and the yew-trees in the hollow. It was worth while to get up

early to see the sun rise behind them. I wish I had never left Kingley Vale!"

She sat down, relapsing into her usual attitude of hopeless despondency. All that Reine could do to please her was to leave her in solitude. It went to the kind heart of the young girl like a cutting reproach to hear, as she closed the door gently upon her, the woman's low, despairing moans, and the dull sound of the knocking of the legs of the chair against the uncarpeted floor, as the miserable occupant of the chamber rocked herself to and fro impatiently.

The trees outside, now in full leaf, darkened the dim old pictures on the walls at which Lord Boscawen's steward was gazing, when Reine Helier, with her light, quick step, entered the parlour.

"Who is this?" he said, sharply, turning round as she came near. "Flesh and blood, I hope! Pardon me, young lady! I thought that the ghosts Helier prates about were stirring. I have heard that he has a relation—a foreigner—staying with him. But my thoughts had gone back a long way—as far as the date of that picture.

Reine looked at the fair, delicate youth, with long, slender fingers, and a girl's complexion, dark, haughty eyes, full of impetuous

spirit, which seemed to glance disdainfully over the landscape he was represented as surveying, from a balcony trellised with vine leaves.

“ My Lord is still a handsome man, though he is past eighty,” continued the steward. “ There are his sisters,” pointing to a group of shepherdesses, with their crooks, standing on a lawn. “ They are all dead long ago—not one of them lived to be married; and it will be the same with the present generation. They are falling off fast. The Boscawens have been a shortlived race; but I am a young man compared with his Lordship, and he bids fair to survive me.”

“ Monsieur Fleming—Mrs. Helier’s son—is like this portrait,” said Reine. “ He is, I believe, one of the family.”

“ His father was my Lord’s second cousin. A great many of the name have dropped off lately,” said the steward, who was again contemplating the picture. “ What do you know of this young Fleming, my Lord’s cousin? Is there anything of the gentleman about him? I fear it is not likely. He has been in a bad school. These traders from France and Holland—I don’t mean that they are any the worse for being French”—he observed, as the colour mounted to Reine’s cheek; “ but any set of men, who openly or

secretly defy the laws, are sure to be demoralised. Ah! I see I am trenching on delicate ground. Ladies always defend smuggling. Where can you get such gloves, and silks, and shawls, as are hawked about the country, after being brought over by Mynheer and other contraband dealers?"

"I would not wear a smuggled glove, nor touch their silks and shawls!" said Reine, indignantly. "You are quite wrong. Though I am not English, I respect your laws. I honour the service—the British navy—the Coast-guard! I detest the contrebandiers! Perhaps, not all," she added, checking herself. "Mynheer was my father's friend, and brought me over to this country. I do not hate Jacob Mohr."

Mr. Hearnshaw looked at her inquisitively.

"Was your father's name Helier?" he asked. "How long is it since you lost him?"

The tears gathered in Reine's eyes.

"I have been an orphan nearly two years," she answered. "When Captain Mohr came home last spring from a long voyage, he offered me a passage to visit my English cousins, who wished me to reside with them. It was for my parent's sake and out of his own kind heart that Mynheer assisted me. He is my very good friend."

“ Well, I will not say a word against him, then,” said the steward, softened at sight of the girl’s grief.

“ You came in La Belle Marie? Now, tell me, in French or English—I understand a little of the language, though it was not commonly taught when I was a boy, but there were French people at the Grange then—was that long voyage you mention of Captain Mohr’s from one of the Dutch settlements in the East, and did he bring any passenger back with him?”

“ I cannot tell you that,” Reine answered. “ Jacob Mohr is a silent, reserved man. He is very quiet; and, when I was on board his vessel, I asked no questions. Indeed, I would rather not speak of his affairs.”

“ That is enough. It is a matter of no consequence,” said the steward. “ Now, mademoiselle, I must take leave of you. Tell Mr. Helier I did not like to wait longer, and that I must make his stepson’s acquaintance at my next visit.”

“ Do you not rest here to-night?” said Reine, with instinctive politeness. “ Has my cousin gone out? Do not be angry with him. He is ill, perhaps, or unhappy—often he is both. I have a room prepared where you will sleep comfortably. Let me make you some tea.”

“ No! no! merci, chère demoiselle! I would rather not sleep here. My bed and supper are bespoke at the Boscawen Arms at Lezant. Mr. Helier and I have said our say, and he is gone, at my request, in search of young Fleming; but he is evidently not forthcoming. Bon soir, et au revoir! I trust that when I come again I shall find you at the Grange. Truly, it is the pleasantest sight this old house has afforded me.”

The steward took leave of the young girl, and getting into his gig, drove carefully through the thick woods, which were almost as dark as the haunted chambers of Lord Boscawen's Manor-house. A white owl, flitting with its wings extended from thicket to thicket, the swoop of the bats in his face and across the road, and the scream of the jays, alone disturbed the evening solitude. When he came out upon the moor the air was lighter, but over the sea hung a broad curtain of mist, gradually spreading from where, all day, it had been coiled up on the horizon. One after another the wild features of the landscape were obscured; the gigantic headlands that shut in the harbour of Lezant; the silent church-tower; and as, at last, the vapour came rolling towards him over the crowns of the nearer heights, Mr. Hearnshaw drove on more quickly, fearful of losing the

track, which, on the turf, was but faintly indicated.

He came at last safely to the public highway, and saw with satisfaction the lights of the hill-town blazing against the steep sides of the down, from the naps or raised banks above the road.

Dame Brock, who had come out to the door at the sound of wheels, turned in again with a sour aspect as the steward's gig rattled past. It was well known in the place that he had engaged rooms at the Boscawen; and whatever custom he could bring, it might be presumed, was to benefit the new inn.

"It's no one coming for us!" she said, sharply, as Andrew got up lazily from the bench. "Only old Hearnshaw coming back from the Grange. He passed this morning before you were stirring, you great, good-for-nothing-lie-a-bed! and now it's a mercy he doesn't want to stop here, considering what a precious piece of work you and Lance have set me to do. If it were only for the sake of old times, one would think he ought to have put up at this house; but some folks have no gratitude. Where would he have found a public, except this one, I should like to know, forty, thirty, twenty, ten, or even five, years ago? He's travelled this road as long. If he was ever so dry, and his horse

stumbling with bad ruts and hard driving, he must have gone on to Camelford or Trevena, to say the least of it, if the Three Crowns had not set up its sign on the waste for the blessing of travellers. It's just a mocking of Providence to pass us by!"

Without remorse or misgiving, the steward had driven down the steep street, and through the intervening gully among the hills, until he came to the waterside inn. The fog had not spread so far, and the lights gleamed bright and clear across the road. Morgan Price was standing at the door, drawn thither from one or other of his numerous employments by the sound of the approaching carriage; while his wife, now quite restored to her accustomed blooming prettiness, was carrying in the tea-things to the neat sitting-room on the ground-floor, on the opposite side of the passage to the parlour usually occupied by Osborne.

A substantial ham flanked the large loaf of home-baked bread, and a couple of well-fed chickens were grilling at the kitchen fire for the steward's repast; which was to combine dinner, tea, and supper in one, since he had partaken very sparingly of the refreshments provided for him at the Grange. He rubbed his hands, which were chilled by his cold drive through the gathering mist, and entered

his cheerful quarters with an air of great satisfaction.

“ I am glad you do such credit to my Lord’s name. I wish you good fortune with all my heart, Mr. Price. That smuggling landlady at the Three Crowns glowered at me as I passed. I believe she would have strewn broken glass under my horse’s feet if she dared; but no matter! Mother Brock’s reign—a very bad one, like Queen Mary’s of bloody memory—will come to an end at last: the sooner the better! Is there anything stirring in the place?”

“ Much as usual, Sir,” said Price, coming nearer the table to set the bright copper tea-kettle on its stand. “ Ours is a lively little town. There’s generally something on foot.”

“ Oh! there’s something brewing? I thought as much. That old woman on the hill-top looked full of mischief. What is hatching in her old thatched hen-coop? More plots against the Excise?”

“ A man that stopped to give his horse a feed at noon said that all along the coast people were looking out for the French schooner. She’s due now, and will creep in if this mist thickens. They say she has such clever hands aboard that it is of no manner of use trying to baulk her: but we’ve sharp eyes too, and a clever head taking thought

for the King's rights. Our Lieutenant is not one easily to give up what he has in hand. I expect he'll be down again shortly; but, wherever he is, I'll engage he has not forgotten his duty."

"I am glad you are both so zealous," said Mr. Hearnshaw. "My Lord earnestly desires to see this lawless traffic put down; and I should not hesitate to promise, in his name, a handsome reward to any person who gave information concerning La Belle Marie and her cargo. I hope none of his more respectable tenantry encourage these free-traders."

"People do say that the schooner's freight is consigned to Mr. Helier of Woods," said Price. "Mind, I don't answer for the truth of Lezant gossip; but Captain Mohr slept at the Grange the only night he came on shore, and John Helier and he have made up their differences. They were partners, long ago; and have run many a cargo together as the French Brothers. What's bred in the bone, you know, will come out in the flesh; and a smuggler's a smuggler to the end of his life."

"Well, I shall certainly speak to Mr. Helier," said the steward, with a marked increase of gravity. "Has any one an idea when this landing is likely to take place?"

“Strange to say, the hostler has just given me this bit of paper, with my name upon it, which he found stuffed under the cushion of the driving-seat in your honour’s gig: an ill-written scrap enough, but I think it may be depended upon. I was keeping it for our young officer; still, as you are interested, Sir, it may be as well to show it you.”

Price took from his pocket a scrap of faded tinted paper, on which, in a woman’s handwriting, was unsteadily inscribed,—

“Look out for the smuggling schooner off Arthur’s Castle, the first Sunday after the new moon, when a light is shown upon the shore by the ravine under Boscawen’s Grange. The tide will serve at eleven o’clock.”

“Such is the use they make of his Lordship’s favour! Upon my word, this is too audacious! I trust you, Mr. Price, will do greater credit to our patronage,” said the steward. “Do you know this writing?—but, perhaps, that is not a fair question.”

“Oh! I would have no objection to answer it, if I could,” said Price; “but, to the best of my belief, I never saw any scribbling like that before. It’s more like what a child would make that scarce could form its letters, yet wanted them to look firm, and the lines

flowing. It's all crooked and ill-spelt; and yet the paper's not what a common person would use. Perhaps we had better not try and guess who sent me this scrawl. It might bring them into trouble."

"Much the best not to inquire farther!" said his wife, who, at the steward's request, was making his tea. "Poor soul! she meant well, I'll answer for it; and perhaps knows what a bad set those smugglers are. I am sure it was a woman wrote that notice. Is the tea to your liking, Sir? Can I do anything more?"

"Not at present, thank you: the tea is excellent. Good evening, Mrs. Price. Ah! I see you have bells here: not like Mrs. Brock's, where the loudest callers get the soonest served. I will ring, if I require anything."

The host and hostess respectfully withdrew, having placed within reach of their guest everything he could reasonably require for the next half hour. At the expiration of that time, the bell rung sharply, and was answered by Price, the young couple keeping no waiter. Morgan, in spite of his good-humour, was a long-headed Welshman, and resisted all the cajoleries by which his wife strove to learn what passed on the occasion.

He was closeted for some time with the steward, who then retired to his bed-room, and found, on his well-aired couch and lavender-scented pillows, that repose which he had not chosen to court in the sombre chambers at the Grange.

CHAPTER III.

As there was but one road out of Lezant, no person was the wiser concerning the course pursued by Mr. Hearnshaw when he left the place next morning, or the townspeople would have speculated and gossiped about what could possibly take him again to the Grange. The mist had rolled back from the landscape, and lay curled up in a thick mass over the sea; but the woodland was still dripping with moisture as he drove along under the trees.

The first person he encountered, as he reached the yard gate, was Lance Fleming. Though the steward had never seen the young man, he had no difficulty in recognising him, and raised his hat more respectfully than he had done, the day before, to his stepfather.

“This is fortunate! We will take a turn together, Mr. Fleming,” said the agent, alighting from his gig, and fastening the reins to the gate-post. “My business is quite as much with you, this morning, as with Mr.

Helier. No need to disturb him: perhaps we may understand each other better."

Lance looked as haughty as the Baron's portrait upon the wall. "Your business with Mr. Helier and myself can scarcely be a common one," he said, arrogantly. "We never have dealings together. If he were to embark in any undertaking, it would be a sign for me to get clear of it."

"Cut adrift and leave him, eh?" said the old man. "Well, the sooner you act up to your own precept the better. If I am not misinformed, he has engaged lately in transactions which will be in the last degree displeasing to Lord Boscawen. I advise you, young gentleman, if you wish to show deference to the head of your father's family, to break off all connexion with the smuggler, Jacob Mohr."

"Lord Boscawen has never acknowledged the relationship, as far as I am concerned," Lance answered. "I do not see that he has any right to interfere with my actions. Jacob Mohr has been to me the best friend of the two."

"Oh, nonsense, nonsense! Lord Boscawen is one of your nearest relations," insisted the steward. "Ever since he lived here, forty years ago, he has had an antipathy to these foreign traders. I am sorry to hear

that Mr. Helier has dealings with one of them. This must be put a stop to. It is impossible that my Lord can countenance any infraction of the revenue laws. He has always set his face against laxity on this point. His principles absolutely forbid it."

"It is the only time I ever heard he had any," said Lance, sneeringly. "What's in the wind now?"

"Mr. Helier has committed an error which Lord Boscawen will not overlook," replied the steward. "I could turn him out of the farm to-morrow, if I liked, and place you or any other man in his stead who would conduct himself differently. But I do not wish to be hasty: I am glad to have had this opportunity of communicating with you first. Are you aware when the smuggling vessel, La Belle Marie, is likely to be off the coast?"

"You had better ask John Helier," said Lance, roughly. "You are right enough about that. I believe he has a concern in the next venture, and for that reason I have had nought to do with it. As for Lord Boscawen's pleasure or displeasure in the matter, I care not a straw for either. If I thought it would anger him, I should be as likely as not to put in for a share of the risk and profits at the last."

"You are a very wrong-headed young

man," remarked the steward, gravely. "Do you not see that your position is altered? Have you never taken the trouble to reflect that your life is more valuable than it was formerly? Here are Lord Boscawen's sons and grandchildren dropping into the grave, and your father was collaterally related to him—descended, like my Lord, from Eric, the third Baron. Failing one or two precarious lives, you—unless some other claimant should start up—are the next heir male."

Lance's countenance altered. He did not interrupt the steward, but listened attentively.

"It was to your father," Mr. Hearnshaw said, "that Lord Boscawen was indebted for the first intimation that a very strange—a most audacious—pretension was about to be put forward by a person professing to be very nearly related to him. Captain Fleming, in spite of his careless habits, entertained a very strong notion, even in those days, of the importance of his position. He felt this matter touch him closely; and was, up to the very sudden termination of his life, disposed to exert himself actively in what, at my Lord's age, were it now revived, would be a most trying business. The man in question, with whom your father's wish to sustain the honour and dignity of the family brought him into

communication, was in all respects unfit to become what we may perhaps, one day, see you—the representative of an ancient house. He had been from childhood brought up among the smugglers of the Channel Islands — ‘privateersmen’ they might, in those war-times, be called; and subsequently, by his illegal practices making himself amenable to the laws, he was sent out of the country—transported for seven years—having been taken by our cruisers when in command of the *Nautilus*, an armed vessel, with a large cargo of contraband goods on board.

“Those who had Lord Boscawen’s interest at heart, and considered it their duty to ward off annoyance on a point concerning which he has always been very sensitive, watched over the later career of this individual; and it has been ascertained, that having, after several unsuccessful attempts, effected his escape from his place of penal servitude, and ranged the Bush for two years, he ultimately found his way to Java, made money, and established himself in a more respectable situation, as one of the Dutch firm, for whose Hamburg correspondents Jacob Mohr trades with these parts.

“Now, do you see that it is, in fact, your cause which Lord Boscawen anxiously desires to uphold? and that the Dutch skip-

per cannot be your friend, since it is as the emissary of these foreign merchants—if Mynheer is nothing more—that he introduced himself at Woods, where he has been culpably afforded opportunities for close investigation. Either this impostor was or is on board *La Belle Marie*, engaged in the same illegal traffic which formerly was his ruin. I tell you, candidly, that the claim which these conspirators seek to establish affects the succession to the Boscawen peerage and estates.”

The steward stopped, and earnestly regarded Lance, who was still silent. It was, perhaps, the first time that the wayward, wilful youth, had ever meditated seriously upon his anomalous position.

“ Lord Boscawen,” Mr. Hearnshaw said, presently, with something of reluctance in his tone and manner, “ when he was a young man, like yourself, became entangled in a very unwise and much-to-be-deplored connexion. Gallantry was the vice of his day; and at the most profligate Court in Europe, where he principally resided, the highest in rank set an example which would have been reprobated in sober England. Be his past errors what they may, they have cost him dear; an old age of sorrow is the price often paid for a youth of pleasure.

“ You are familiar with the idea of the French lady who once lived with him here ; but are you aware that she claimed to be his wife, and always affirmed that a secret marriage had taken place abroad ? My Lord denied this fact. Madame quitted his protection ; and it is said, like himself, formed other ties. Years pass away. It is hard to conceive the feelings of a man of mature age, who has reformed his life, married a lady of his own rank, and seen his sons and daughters grow up around him, when he learns that there are people mad or wicked enough, according to his view of the case, to be ready to assert, on oath, that he has committed bigamy—that his honoured wife, for whom he has worn mourning since the day of her death, was not legally wedded to him, and that their sons and daughters are illegitimate. The sins of his youth rise up against him—the vows and subterfuges—the mock form laughingly submitted to—the farce he intended, as he confesses, to quiet a timid conscience—ah ! he may regret them now, but it is too late to undo the deeds which lend such a fearful colour of truth to the charge against him !

“ Well, I see you are startled. You regard this case as a very wild chimera ; but I tell you that, by the English law, this wo-

man's children, though she were afterwards married, in her own country, to another man, may yet have legal rights which would effectually bar your title to the succession;—such men, we will say, as your stepfather, Jean Helier, and the transported felon, his brother, might come forward and trouble his Lordship's declining years, on the plea that a binding marriage with their mother did take place. The elder Helier knows that we have a copy of his *acte de naissance*, showing him to have been born before the date in question. He has always been quiet and inoffensive, but might become a dangerous tool in designing hands.

“As you are one of his Lordship's family—the one whom, after his own grandchildren, such a suit would injure—I have been empowered by him to give you, in confidence, these details. He is a changed man, and inclined to look upon you with regard and affection. You must not allow what I own to have been erroneous neglect on his part, to prevent your profiting by his present favourable dispositions. The last phrase in his letter to me was,—‘Seek out young Fleming, Hearnshaw, and see what can be done for him. He may be my heir, yet; and his claims have a prior interest and touch me more nearly than those set up by the amphibious offspring of a Breton smuggler.

Tell my godson Lancelot, that I am getting old, and my children are dying round me. He must fight my battles.' ”

“ Well! I will think it over,” said Lance, gruffly. “ Bouffe! there is work cut out for us. How will you like capturing your old master, and sending him beyond seas, to please Lord Boscawen? ”

The dog, who had been showing his white teeth at the steward, growled low, but vengefully. Lance's jeering tone had a breath in it of menace; and Bouffe seemed well disposed to back him. The steward looked at them both distrustfully.

“ Remember,” he said to Lance, “ that your interests and those of his Lordship are in this matter identical. You say that you will not act with Jean Helier. Well and good! Set yourself firmly against him. These men are daring offenders against the revenue laws. It is the duty of every honest person to bring them to the punishment they deserve. La Belle Marie is expected to be off Lezant Point before the moon is a week older. I advise you to keep a sharp lookout for her.”

He lifted his hat once more to the young man; and going to the place where he had left his horse fastened to the gate-post, got into the gig, and drove off again.

“ So, John Helier means to make his

fortune in a week's time!" muttered Lance to himself, as he walked away. "I wonder who gave Hearnshaw the information. If anything could make me join in this piece of villainy, it would be to punish Mohr for taking Helier into his counsels. The moon is in her last quarter; and it needs only that I should leave that fool, Andrew, to mismanage the light at Porth Hern, to bring La Belle Marie upon Tintagel rocks!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE French schooner lay at anchor under the dark slate-cliffs of Lundy Island, swaying with the tide, which was rolling in strongly among the insulated rocks, and dashing at the base of the old Constable. The place, wild and dreary, seemed as fit to be the haunt of pirates, now, as when it was the stronghold, in Henry the Third's days, of Morisco and his accomplices. The beetling cliffs overhung the small haven, and heavy storm-clouds darkened the sky. It was likely to be a night when better anchorage would be required than was afforded by that rock-encumbered, unfriendly harbour.

There were signs of vigilant activity on board the smuggling vessel, although she lay motionless, almost grazing the rocks with her keel. As the shadows deepened and lengthened, Jacob Mohr's anxiety increased. He cast sharp glances round as he paced the deck, marking the clouds drive over the land and settle in a thick bank on the water; and

listening to the low growl of the distant thunder, which had been heard at intervals throughout the day.

Night was beginning to close in thicker and earlier than usual, when the schooner was got suddenly under way. Sail after sail was spread to the wind, till her slender masts bent under the weight of canvas;—reef after reef cast loose, and she dashed through the waters, shuddering as if with glee, while she scattered foam from the waves, which broke and covered her deck like flakes of fleecy snow.

Scarcely a word was spoken. Each man of the small, well-trained crew, was at his post. Even Jacob Mohr's quick eye could detect no trace of carelessness. La Belle Marie was loaded to the water's edge with a rich cargo, and every sailor on board would have risked his life to land the goods safely.

As she neared the coast, a white speck on the waters attracted the attention of her Captain. La Belle Marie was now flying fast before the strong breeze, which blew fiercely, but fitfully, from under the thick canopy of cloud;—the dot on the black waters might have been a sea-bird, but then it would alternately have risen aloft and swooped down again to the face of the sea. No, it was the sail of a small boat steered out from the land

to meet them. Most likely, a pilot coming to offer his services to guide the vessel along that dangerous coast.

The craft was too small to excite alarm, but it was carefully scrutinised. Presently, a tiny flag fluttered aloft. The schooner inclined yet more to the sweep of the blast; and in ten minutes the little skiff shot under her bows. Lance Fleming leaped on deck, and was warmly welcomed by the smuggling Captain and his crew.

La Belle Marie darted on, under press of canvas, for half an hour longer; then slackened sail, and crept along the shore. The contorted forms of the jagged cliffs loomed through the darkness, their black tops lost to sight in the mist which had settled over them; while at their base thundered the eternal surge of that tempestuous sea, bursting out in flashes of white light against the masses of slate. Gradually, the wind fell lower, the sea seeming at the same time to rise, as if uplifted from below by some inward convulsion. Pale gleams of lightning glanced across the seething billows, revealing the strange shapes of the rocky headlands, which sank sheer down into the water, each, as it momentarily came into view, appearing close at hand and menacing.

Notwithstanding the very manifest peril

of being driven on such a coast, the French schooner kept on her course; and in her wake, not less cleverly handled, an armed vessel, with every shred of canvas she could carry spread to catch the dying gale, was seen by the smuggler's crew, before they came abreast of Arthur's Cove, seemingly in full pursuit, and gradually gaining upon them.

"There is the Curlew, Lieutenant Osborne's cutter, off Penkennæ Head," said Lance, as he mounted the companion-ladder with Jacob Mohr, after holding conference with him in his cabin. "Look, how she flies past those white streaks that mark the black rock! She must have the devil for her pilot. I tell you, the goods cannot be landed off Woods to-night. Were the cutter out of the way, there is too much surf upon the beach. We must run La Belle Marie into Lezant harbour."

The Dutchman, daring as he was, hesitated.

"Gott im Himmel! What if I lose her? My vessel is the dearest thing to me on earth, and it would be a lighter task to enter the jaws of hell than to thread the pass into that black inlet, on such a night as this!"

"It is your best, if not your only chance," said Lance. "The people in the place are on the watch for us. They will

show lights on every point of the crags that line the inlet. Mohr! I conjure you to give the control of your crew for half an hour to me. I will answer for the safety of your vessel. But you do not, you cannot know the entrance to Lezant harbour as well as I do."

"Be it so!" said the foreigner. "What I know of your town does not encourage me. I hate the sound of its name. But I believe there is no other way. I hold you responsible for the loss of my vessel, if she grounds upon the rocks or is taken; and recollect! I will not be made prisoner alive."

He walked aft among his crew. Lance took the helm. A sheet of white flame at that instant spread over the sea, showing the cutter beating her way swiftly through the dark, angry waters.

Lance Fleming cast not another backward glance at his enemy. Black night fell over the sea as the lightning faded from the sky, but he had seen enough to guide him. The bold bluffs which shut in the creek were close at hand. La Belle Marie tacked again, and cleared the Race that ran out at the base of the great headland. Then, while the cutter was labouring in the heavy sea off the promontory, Lance, taking advantage of the mighty darkness, changed the course of the schooner, and,

with practised skill, shot her into the deep waters of the inlet.

The Curlew, completely deceived, kept on her way, tacking, presently, as the schooner had done, to avoid the Race. Not a star was visible through the haze, nor a warning beacon on the heights to show the perils of the coast. There was not a man in all that district, except the landlord of the new inn, who would have lifted a finger to save the Revenue cutter and her loyal crew from destruction.

Glancing lights, held out by willing hands for the guidance of La Belle Marie as she passed into Lezant harbour, dotted the face of the cliffs, and were one by one extinguished, until the windings of the creek prevented the twinkling rays from becoming visible to any passing vessel. Then, from the low workshops at the water's edge, from the quay, and from every cranny of the black rocks, blazed forth torches and lanterns. The new inn alone remained perfectly dark. Its square walls were distinctly marked out against the brightly-illuminated cliffs and buildings in its vicinity.

Lezant hill-town was in the wildest confusion. All along the naps, every window was lighted up. There might have been received the news of a great victory, or of a king's accession. But, indeed, no such great public

event would have excited, in that remote place, as much joy and triumph as the advantage gained over the Revenue cruiser. Men drank deep in the tap-room of the Three Crowns that night, and Mother Brock and Andrew were busy serving their customers long after midnight. At the Boscawen, there was not a single measure quaffed of the spirits Morgan Price had brought with him from Swansea.

Osborne had quite lost sight of the chase ; but, from the position in which he last saw La Belle Marie, he believed that they must be close upon her. The fog rose like a wall between him and the land. He sounded again and again, and the lead sank into deep water ; but so it would have done at the distance of but a few feet from many of the most perilous masses of rock upon that precipitous coast. He did not know how great was the drift of the current off the headlands, at the time of the flood-tide.

At last, a light shone out a-head ; the preconcerted signal which was to show the smugglers the exact spot where to run their cargo ashore at an ancient landing-place, sheltered by jutting rocks, which formed a kind of natural breakwater. The information Osborne had received on this point was very precise ; and with a beating heart, but with

clear voice and firm hand, he gave directions accordingly, and personally took part in the exertions of his crew.

The leaden clouds hung like a pall above him. What is this mighty mass, close to the vessel? A grating, jarring sound sent the blood in a wild ferment through his veins. "Put back the helm!" he shouted, hoarsely. "We are not at Porth Hern: we are driving on the promontory! Yonder are the ruins of Arthur's Castle!"

Hardly had the words escaped him, when the jet of flame, hitherto emitted from a pile of boughs laid upon the top of the cliff, broke forth in a lurid glow. The dark wall of slate, close in front, crowned with the ancient Saxon fortress, loomed grandly overhead, as, with a loud crash, the current of the ocean drove the Curlew hard and fast upon the rocks. Wave after wave swept over her deck, carrying her crew with them into the dark depths of the caverned recesses, now filled by the roaring flood-tide.

As the beams of his beloved cutter groaned and creaked beneath his feet, uttering those strange, plaintive moans which seem, in a shipwrecked vessel, to lend vitality to her parting timbers, Osborne's brave heart sank within him. Though death appeared at hand he thought not of it, but of the good, gallant

fellows who had served him and their country so loyally, and were now the play of the tossing billows. He saw them borne away without his having the power to aid them, vanishing in the thick darkness spread all around him, excepting at that one bright spot where the accursed pile of brushwood shed its wizard-like radiance on the dark old ruins.

The flame died out as quickly as it had shot up, now that its work of mischief was done; but Osborne fancied he saw figures moving about near it before the blaze faded. If it were so, no assistance was proffered to the crew of the cutter, clinging to whatever came to hand. They were bruised to death against the rocks, or washed out to sea beyond the view of their commander, who, until the last moment, stayed by his vessel. When the planks on which he was standing parted, he struck out boldly, and swam through the floating pieces of wreck towards the strand, which stretched out in a long dark line, visible above the white surf of the raging breakers.

Once within their vortex, every fibre of his frame was in active play. The love of life reawoke in his breast, overcoming, for the time being, the crushing agony caused by the loss of his cutter and her crew. He struggled

manfully with the billows, and, when his strength was at last exhausted, they had left him beyond the limits set to their fury; thrown by the highest wave upon the beach, just above the spot where the rocky tunnel, which nearly separates the peninsula of Tintagel from the mainland, has been hollowed out by the action of the sea.

CHAPTER V.

YEARS of bitterness and discord, which even the children born to them could not assuage, had destroyed all semblance of affection between Helier and his wife. The weight on his mind must have become intolerable, before he appealed for aid or sympathy to such a miserable comforter.

He had laid his plans for landing the goods from the French schooner, and disposing of them profitably, with as much astuteness as he had displayed in his best, or, perhaps, worst days. But the man's heart was dead within him, and this sanguine mood did not last long.

This half-naturalised foreigner, without friends or connexions in the neighbourhood, holding his land from year to year by favour—conscious of his own inadequate performance of the task he had undertaken, and utterly unfit for any honest employment—trembled lest the indulgence which had hitherto allowed him to remain in the re-

spectable position he had occupied since his marriage with Fleming's widow, should no longer be extended towards him. He knew that he would leave the Manor Farm a beggar.

Though Helier had not laid out money on the land, he had not put by a shilling. His old smuggling habits clung to him; and he was very improvident. Whatever came to hand was spent; no one, least of all himself, knew how. With an income on which persons of his class might have lived comfortably, he dragged on existence wearily: always in debt; and denying his wife and family the smallest gratification. Long before this time, Mrs. Helier had sunk into nearly her present state of abject indifference, and had ceased to importune him. Their children went about ragged and dirty; and, until Reine somewhat improved their condition, might have been taken for little gipsies.

Sometimes, he repented bitterly of having been beguiled again into the track he had trodden, years ago, with bold, unflinching courage: at other moments, a spark of his old audacity was rekindled. When word was brought to him that the schooner was discharging her freight on Lezant quay, he went out, more than once, into the misty night, down the gloomy avenue, where the fog hung dripping from the boughs; and turned back,

each time, wretched and irresolute, to his home.

Mrs. Helier was suffering more than usual; her sickly frame disorganised by the thunder-laden atmosphere, and her heart beating with terror at the lightning. Reine was not with her, and no one had been compassionate enough to close the shutters or bring her a light. The apartment was alternately dark and bright, as the flashes came and went.

“What is the matter?” said her husband, angrily, when, unconscious of his presence, she groaned aloud. “Are you ill?—why do you sit in the dark? Mon Dieu! what a storm is threatening! The clouds hang over the house like a mountain. Ah! we have not seen the worst of it yet. It is not a pleasant thing to face it. The rain will come presently.”

Mrs. Helier did not reply. There was no sound whatever, except the man’s ejaculations of complaint.

“Mais, c’est affreux! Est-ce qu’elle est devenue sourde? Phœbe! speak to me! Are you there? Do you hear what I am saying?”

A low, half-articulate murmur came out of the darkness where his wife sat, as far as possible from the window. Helier bent forward to listen to her.

“Eh bien, que dis-tu?—Psha! I always forget that you have no French. Those idiot children would understand me better; but this is not for their ears, and I cannot say it, as I wish, in English. But no matter. Come nearer to me, I say!”

The wretched woman dragged her chair across the bare floor. Helier shuddered at the creaking sound.

“There! there! assez!” he said, savagely. “Stop where you are. You can hear me now, I suppose? I do not want you nearer.”

The noise stopped at once. Helier could almost have wished it to recommence, so dead was the silence.

“I want you to help me,” he said, hoarsely. “There are between us secrets which none must share. Speak! are you imbecile, that you cannot answer me? Do you intend to aid me?”

“Yes!” said his wife, in a low, terrified tone. “When you speak in that way I know what must follow. What am I to do?”

“There has been a wreck on the strand. A man lies next door to death in this house. Can I trust you to nurse him?—What a fool I am to look for sense or feeling in a log, a post! Reine would have anticipated me. Of what are you dreaming? I tell you that young Osborne, the officer of the Curlew,

has been cast ashore; and those fools have brought him here. The miserables! What are we to do with him?"

A sort of smothered weeping was heard from the dark spot near the oaken wainscot where Mrs. Helier's chair stood. She had sunk back in it quite out of sight.

"Is she dead?" said Helier, peering at her when the low wailing ceased. "Listen to me, Phœbe! His name is not Osborne; it is St. Erme. He is the son of that man who was sent beyond seas for murder—whether justly or not, is no concern of ours; only I thought you might feel some compassion for his innocent offspring. His punishment has been heavy."

There was still no reply. He went close up to her. Her hands were cold as death; but, as he slightly touched the wasted fingers that hung over the arm of the chair, her faculties revived.

"C'est bien—that is well—wake up! We have no time for fainting-fits at present. Do you understand me? I am not able myself to attend to this young man. Those idiots have placed him in a part of this house which I do not willingly enter."

His wife made some indistinct response, which seemed to satisfy Helier. He rose, and looked through the window; shrugging

his shoulders when he saw the dripping rain, which was now falling.

“Ça n'est pas agréable!” he muttered. “N'importe. I must stop Jacob Mohr's sending the goods here. What could make him think of it?”

He went out, without saying another word to his wife, crossing his hands behind him, and bending his head upon his chest, with his hat pulled low upon his brow, for the rain came pelting in his face. He did not, however, turn back again, but walked down the avenue, and along the track leading to Lezant, at a quick pace, with the thick blackness of the night all around him.

He paused when footsteps were heard coming to meet him, and in a faint voice uttered the password of the night among the smugglers. It was responded to cheerily.

“There is some one with you, Mynheer. Hola! let him answer the challenge,” said the Frenchman, drawing back. “Who goes there?”

“Lance Fleming!” was the answer, given in bold, decided accents.

“Let him give the countersign!” said Helier. “Is he one of us?”

“Aye, aye!” said Mohr. “All right! Lance is one good fellow — mein freund. He has saved the schooner and her cargo. Let him pass free!”

The three men joined company. Helier was still sullen.

“Better late than never!” he said. “I thought you were not minded to try a chance with us, Lance. What altered your way of thinking? I do not like sudden changes.”

“That is my affair and Captain Mohr’s,” said his stepson. “You need not grudge me my share of the bargain, since you get the profits while I take only the risk.”

“Nimmermehr!” said the smuggling Captain. “Dass ist nicht recht. That is not Jacob Mohr’s way of doing business. Let us all share and share alike.”

“No!” said Lance. “I will have nought to do with your cargo. I mean to wash my hands of this contraband trade. It does not become a gentleman, and my prospects in life are improving. Who knows but you may all have to doff your caps to me, yet?”

“These are bad jests!” said Helier. “Let us talk of other things. Lance is right so far. I do not wish to offend Lord Boscawen, and he has prohibited the contraband more strongly than the king. What for are those carts to be sent to my house? I will not have the Lezant smugglers coming and going at their pleasure. Is there time to stop them?”

“No, no! Woods is one very good hiding-place; I do not desire a better,” said

Mohr. "There are lockers and cupboards — yes, and, what is best, people are afraid to look into them! The Grange has a bad name in the country. No one will peep into the ghost's apartment to seek for the brandy and silk dresses; and there is a cabinet in the thick wall big enough to hide every bale La Belle Marie brought over."

"You must not put them there!" said Helier, in an agitated tone. "That room is not at my disposition. We have a guest, one who is too sick to be moved, and with whom it behoves us to be cautious. Has not the news reached you?" he continued, lowering his voice, "that, when the schooner put into Lezant harbour, the cutter struck upon the rocks beneath Arthur's Castle? Every soul on board perished, except the young Lieutenant. Some of our men — curse them! — brought him to my house, and placed him in the very room you have mentioned. He is there still — that is, if he lives. The rocks had so bruised him, and he was so beaten about by the waves, that there seemed to be no life in him at first: but he may recover. We must be prepared for the worst."

"You are an amiable fellow!" said Mohr, ironically. "What harm has this poor lad done you? I, who am his natural enemy, am sorry for him. He has lost his ship, and lies, you

say, half dead in that Schlafzimmer of yours which has so bad a reputation. Why should you wish him dead?"

Helier did not speak for several moments.

"Captain Mohr and I have business together, Lance," he said, at last. "What we have to say concerns only ourselves."

"Is it your wish that I should leave you, Captain Mohr?" said Lance. "I will not go at this man's bidding."

"Well, perhaps it is best," replied Mohr, absently, as if his thoughts were busily occupied. "Go back for me to Lezant, Lance, and tell them not to move a single bale of the goods without fresh orders. It will certainly not do to put them in the officer's sick chamber. Now, sir!" he said, in an altered tone, which startled Helier, when they were left alone together, "Kurz und scharf! what have you to propose to me? There is something working in your mind—out with it at once!"

"It is as much for your interest as mine," said Helier. "You are more deeply pledged than I am. By some strange chance, the light intended to guide the schooner to her anchorage brought the cutter on the rocks and drowned her crew. It was an accident, but it would have an ugly look if reported of unfavourably. Now, would it not be better to get La Belle Marie at once under canvas, and

carry this poor lad — St. Erme — Osborne — what signifies it to us how they call him? — for a time out of the way? No need to harm him, but just to let the hue and cry blow over. There are ten chances to one against his recovery. As well for him to die at sea as on land. Once the breath is out of him, it is all one. A lift over the side and a grave in sea-water should have no terrors for a sailor.”

“ So! — that is your scheme?” said Mohr, while, could his companion have seen him, his tall form would have seemed to dilate, and his eyes flashed fire. There was as little likeness in his bearing at that moment to the phlegmatic Dutchman, the trader in slate, as there was in the dejected, slouching gait of Helier to the dashing French smuggler of twenty years ago, — the terror of the Sussex coast!

“ You want my sea-bird to spread her wings, and carry this young fellow away? — say, to the plantations — Jamaica — Cuba — you are not very particular! If he should chance to be troublesome on the voyage, heave him overboard, with a round shot tied to his waist, and drown him like a dog! Would that suit you?”

The tone in which Mohr spoke, by its assumed coolness, deceived Helier.

“ You go a little way beyond me, Herr Mohr. All I want is to send him from this

place for a time ; afterwards, who knows what may happen ? But there will be an inquiry into the loss of this Government cutter. Who is to say more than that she foundered on the rocks, and all on board perished ? There ends the matter. No one knows exactly what her officer had in hand. But, if he survives, — that is, if he is here to give evidence, — ah, then, *mon ami*, all will go ill with us ! He had, I am convinced, very precise intelligence respecting your fine vessel and her cargo, the time and place of landing ; — that would tell against us. We must put one little stopper on his lips for a while. It will be best done by your carrying him with you.”

“ That is quite easy,” answered Mohr. “ I see no great risk or difficulty. You are improving, *Monsieur Helier*. Better to have put Herr Fleming on board the *Nautilus*, when she lay in the Cove, ready for sea. Then he would have been quite safely removed, and I think your mind would be easier. Speak ! Is it not so ? ”

Helier’s teeth chattered with dismay.

“ What is it you mean ? ” he said. “ I do not understand you. This has nothing to do with what is on the tapis. Did *Gervase* tell you about the *Nautilus* ? You were not on board her that night.”

“ Ah ! there are many things I know which

would puzzle you. A man does not live half a century for nothing. Ja! that affair was clumsily managed. I should not like anything of the same kind to occur again. Your cliffs are slippery places, though it is not so dry now. The grass is not so parched as it was then; but it is darker—there is no moon;—a man might fall over, or be pushed—just one little shove!—who could tell? Well, my friend, if such accidents are likely to happen, I will in no way be concerned. You must swear to make over your sick man to me fairly,—not to tamper with your prisoner. Let him come to me as sound in health as his conflict with the winds, and waves, and rocks, has left him. On these conditions, I will take him on board *La Belle Marie*, and set sail; but on no others. Will you promise?”

“Yes!” said Helier, thankful that the darkness concealed his deadly terror. “Assuredly, I do not wish to injure him. I would not have such a crime upon my conscience for worlds.”

“*Sehr wohl!*” said Mohr. “Remember, I keep my word. What I take in hand, I carry out to the end. Now, tell me, in whose charge have you left the Lieutenant? Is *Mademoiselle Reine* nursing him? He must need a woman’s care and kindness.”

“ No, no ! that would never do,” replied Helier, in a harsh voice, which contrasted unpleasantly with Mohr’s softer tone. “ Reine must not know that he is at the Grange. In this matter, she is less to be trusted than other persons. She would run any risk to serve him. They are engaged lovers.”

“ Ha !” said Mohr, drawing his breath deeply. “ That is quite new to me. Mademoiselle Reine is so gay, so pretty ! She should not have given her heart away yet ; and to the commander of a Revenue cruiser ! That is not right !”

“ It is, at all events, the fact,” said Helier, drily. “ That is why she would not sign the paper for you, and refuses always to lend encouragement to the smuggling. She is très opiniâtre —entêtée ! There is no turning her.”

“ Well, we must try the lover’s constancy, then. Nothing tests that of a man like sea-air !” said Mohr. “ But you have not answered my question,—In whose hands have you left the Lieutenant ?”

“ Madame Helier has undertaken the charge,” replied her husband. “ She is not strong. I shall be glad to see her released from it as soon as may be.”

Mohr was silent for an instant ; then he said, stopping abruptly,—

“ I can go no farther with you to-night. I do not wish to sleep at the Grange. The only Schlafzimmer I affectionate there is occupied, and I will not intrude upon Madame Helier’s night-watch. Though I leave you now, you may see me again when you least expect it. Meantime, remember our contract, and keep to it.”

He turned sharp round, and in another moment Helier found himself alone. The utter darkness terrified him. He would have been glad of even Lance’s company, or that of the smuggling Captain, on the road home; but he had to grope his way back in absolute solitude.

He did not turn his steps towards his sick guest’s chamber. At that hour, he durst not have entered the haunted room. Mrs. Helier was probably there, for he could not find her in any other part of the house. Reine came forth when she heard his footstep, and questioned him earnestly as to where he had been; but he would not tell her.

He sat by the empty hearth in the sitting-room, with his elbows on his knees, and his head buried in his hands, without speaking to her.

From several passing circumstances, Reine had drawn the conclusion that the smugglers

were to land a cargo this night; and when she saw Hélier's dispirited countenance, she fancied Osborne had been successful, and that the rich freight of the schooner had become his prize. Little did the warmhearted girl think, as her head sank upon her pillow, that Richard was lying, still unconscious, bruised and wounded, in a room in the same house; and that the cold, unsympathising woman, who seemed to feel neither love nor pity for any human being—scarcely even for her own children—was his sole nurse and appointed guardian for the night.

CHAPTER VI.

PHŒBE HELIER went, with a firmer tread than usual, towards the chamber of the old Grange with which so many terrible associations were connected. Perhaps she felt their force less than others might have done, for her faculties were stupefied by her fear of Helier; and she breathed more freely in a place where she was certain of not encountering him. Hers was not the common grief of a woman mourning for her dead. She had married again within the twelvemonth after her first husband's murder; but she had never lifted up her head since.

No distinct image of the part assigned her rose to her bewildered mind, when Helier called upon her for assistance; but he was right in believing that she would do his bidding. He could have appealed to no stronger feeling in the breast of his unhappy wife, than compassion for the man who had paid so dreadful a price for his idle gallantry.

Colonel St. Erme still lived in her me-

mory, as the handsomest gentleman of his day. His careless compliments sounded in her ear at the dead of night, years after the pretty smiling face he had admired, the agile rounded form, had lost every youthful charm. He alone had treated her with courtesy and consideration. She remembered his visits to the Grange as the pleasantest period of her existence, when the charm of novelty, which so seldom irradiated the dull life she led, was imparted by the presence of the white-handed, smooth-browed, haughty soldier, with his costly lace ruffles and jewellery, finest linen, and sweet odours hanging about his graceful, but not effeminate person.

Her very soul recoiled from the attempt to picture him in his banishment. How could that proud man have borne the degradation? What must he not have suffered? Better to have died—as he had once told her, in his half-confidential talk, he wished might be his fate, since in his domestic circumstances he was not happy—on the field of honour, than to have lived to undergo such a doom!

She had never hitherto felt the smallest interest in his children; but suddenly, in her dull mind, a strong desire to see St. Erme's only son stirred itself into existence. Mary had lived within a few miles of the Grange, all

her life ; but Mrs. Helier had never asked a single question about the desolate girl, nor sought to see her, or do her any act of kindness. Colonel St. Erme had always appeared to her in the light of a gay, single man, fond of pleasure, unencumbered by domestic duties. No image of wife or child was associated with him ; though, when she first knew him, he was married. After that time, he had visited Lezant Parsonage as a widower. She remembered nothing about his children.

It was as though she were about to see him once more, when she trimmed her lamp and went slowly, but with an unfaltering step, to the chamber in which Osborne was lying. All along the passage, she was saying to herself words which she recollected his father to have used—terms, half-flattering, half-cajoling, in which he had jestingly implored her to do him some slight service. The tone of his gentlemanly voice was in her ear ; she fancied that the touch of his delicate hand was felt, drawing her on towards the haunted room.

Nevertheless, she stopped, and a shiver ran through her frame, when she laid her hand on the latch. All the stories she had disregarded—for Mrs. Helier was not so superstitious as her husband—rushed upon her memory. Might it not be that the father's spirit

—if he were dead, as was commonly reported — would be near his dying son in the house of his enemies? Never before had the traditions which hung about the old Grange so appalled its mistress.

Her courage revived after a momentary hesitation: she turned the lock gently, and stepped into the chamber, shading the lamp carefully with her hand, as she approached the bed on which Richard had been laid down by the smugglers. No! this was not he! — not the gay, handsome man, who, a moment ago, seemed present with her. The fair forehead — the clearly-marked eyebrows, slightly contracted, as she had seen his drawn together in moments of strong emotion — the white hand with its long taper fingers — the finely-chiselled, compressed lips — these, indeed, were like him; but the light wavy hair was different, and in Osborne's countenance there was a frank, sunny openness — even now, when death seemed holding him in its grasp — which was not the peculiar characteristic of the more intellectual features of his father.

A still stranger fancy shot into the half-distracted brain of the woman bending over him, as the image she had almost expected to confront melted away. She thought of her own innocent baby — not of Lance as he was now, a bold, harsh-mannered youth, careless

of her sufferings—but of the little sick child she had pretended to come home to nurse, when her mind was set upon meeting Colonel St. Erme. Since that time all her duties had been equally neglected; even those of a mother had devolved upon the French nurse who brought up Zélie and Victoire, and who had returned to her own country, a year before Reine came to the Grange.

All the night through, she tended Richard as if he had been her own son, but he was quite unconscious of her care. His lips moved occasionally, and then she lifted his head on her arm and moistened them, bathing his white forehead with maternal tenderness. Though the lamp she had brought with her went out, she sat unappalled in the darkness, chafing his delicate hands and weeping over them with wild, senseless sorrow. She did not argue with herself respecting his condition, or consider whether his young life might not be passing away in that deadly faintness; but neither did she, as almost every common nurse would have done, allow any tremor to scare her from her post. She sat, hour after hour, till day dawned upon her vigil, in unwearied, sleepless watchfulness, while the wind and rain swept wildly across the ancient window and shook the rattling panes.

When light stole into the room, Mrs.

Helier rose and looked at her patient. For the first time, she felt frightened. A very terrible image took possession of her senses, as she gazed upon that pallid, leaden complexion. She thought of Fleming, her first husband, the man whose corpse had been laid out upon that bed. Then she looked again upon his supposed murderer's son—the child of Edmund St. Erme—and fancied that his cold white face would for ever haunt her, if he died, as he seemed likely to do, before her eyes.

A very painful sense of helplessness distressed her. All the habits of her wasted existence were such as to unfit her for active usefulness. She scarcely knew how to pray for him, and yet some childish, half-forgotten orisons rose to her faded lips. Should she call Leah, or Reine, who had lately been the soul of that dismal house? A very strong feeling held her back. Living or dead, Richard had been placed under her care. She alone was responsible for him. No other woman should meddle with her trust.

There were deep shadows in the room, and her senses were not very acute: she did not hear a man come in, nor see him, till he stood bending over the couch. Jacob Mohr had crossed the chamber, and undrawn the curtains on the farther side of the bed, before Mrs. Helier noticed his entrance. She leaned

forward in her chair, and put out her hands with a sort of defensive gesture, as though the young officer, feeble, half-dead, incapable of protecting himself, could be a fit object for animosity to the smuggler. Any one who had sailed with the Captain of La Belle Marie, or knew aught of his kindly, generous nature, could have told her such fears were causeless.

Jacob Mohr started as he perceived her. Perhaps, in that haggard, wasted face, he thought that he beheld one of the visions which haunted the ghost-chamber.

“Gott im Himmel! — there is death in the air of this room!” he said, looking down on the pale, motionless form, extended on the bed. “It is well I came. Another hour, and this poor boy might have been dead.”

He strode across the apartment, and unbarred and opened the casement, letting in the fresh morning air. Then he came back to Richard.

“Ach! there is no time to lose. We must work with what tools are nearest at hand. Komm, meine Frau! you have sat still long enough. You have almost let this poor child pass away. Come nearer!”

Mrs. Helier steadied her trembling limbs with difficulty, and approached him.

“Hold up the poor fellow’s head! Ach,

this is a bad case! We must not let this insensibility last longer. Be not frightened. I will not harm one of the fine golden hairs of his head. But I must be quick. Himmel und Erde!—I have seen men die like this—go from us like the soft air that wanders through the chamber. It will revive him, playing on his face. Now, can you bear the sight of blood? Place the curtains so—ja wohl! He will scarce feel it. Ah, he has gone through worse pain to-night!”

He pricked with his lancet a vein in the youth's arm. The blood flowed at first drop by drop; then it gushed forth more freely into the bason he had placed to receive it.

“That red stream will save him. We must not take too much. He is weak, and will not bear it. Now for a bandage—that will do. I do not desire a better nurse. Let him rest now. Your good care will preserve him.”

“Will he live?” said Mrs. Helier, anxiously, looking at the pale, still face of the young officer, as the breeze lifted the heavy curls of fair hair from his brow.

“Live?—Ja wohl! what should hinder his living?” said the smuggler, cheerfully. “Bist jung und frisch, mein Kind!—Ah, we do not die so soon for the buffeting of the winds and waves, when we are barely six-

and-twenty! He looks less, but he is that. See, the thick, curling beard! Ah, he is a man! a brave, good man! He is hurt, and he has lost heart. He has seen his comrades perish; but he will revive. Just as the Morgen-Luft, frisch und kühl, will lift up that curtain of cloud, he will shake off his sorrow."

He stood at the casement, leaning out as he spoke. His words reached her from a distance. She sat still by the bedside, without speaking to him. Her cares were all for the sick youth. As yet, there was little sign of amendment. The brave fellows whom he had seen washed out to sea, when the Curlew's planks parted, were not more insensible to her loss than her young commander. The hand of death seemed to be upon him.

Presently, Mohr came again towards her.

"The wind has changed," he said. "When the sun rises, those heavy clouds will sink down, and we shall have a fair breeze. La Belle Marie will shake out her white canvas, and sail quick.

"Listen to me! I do not choose to leave this poor sick boy here. I will not trust him to Jean Helier's tender mercies. I must take him on board my schooner. The air of the open sea will be best for him. Do not fear!" he said, as Mrs. Helier looked

at him with a kind of vague terror. "He will be safe with me."

"Jean will not come here," the woman muttered in a hoarse, low tone. "He is very timid. At night he would not enter this room for worlds."

"Bah! that is childish," said the smuggler. "But, perhaps, he has his reasons. 'Conscience makes cowards of us all.' That is what your great poet says. It is, after all, no business of mine. I do not wish to hear more—not, at least, from you."

Taking Richard St. Erme's hand in his own, he felt his pulse carefully, counting its beats, and comparing them with the time kept by the old-fashioned repeating watch, which he removed from the mantel-shelf, and wound up, before laying it on the table.

"If he does not revive before mid-day," he said, "you must summon more efficient aid than mine. I will send you a trusty messenger. To-night we shall set sail. *Leben sie wohl!* Poor thing! Your troubles have been hard to bear; but you have a good deed to perform now. Let that strengthen you. Save this poor boy's life!"

The woman looked at him with a sort of bewildered consciousness, as he noiselessly left the chamber; but she did not answer. When he departed, she arranged the curtains

and coverings of the bed, putting everything in order with a degree of neatness and skill which was not common with her. Afterwards, she sat down near her patient, watching his less-laboured breathing with satisfaction.

Leah was surprised to see her mistress come into the kitchen that morning, and prepare with her own hands nutriment suited for an invalid.

Mrs. Helier executed her slight task successfully, and was gone before the old servant was certain that she could believe her eyes.

All these unwonted exertions were rewarded when Helier's unhappy wife saw the sick youth under her charge begin slowly to revive. At first, he lay still, not speaking, and sensible only of a gradual, painless return to life. The old room, in which there was not a single familiar object—the pale strange face which looked at him kindly, did not assist in summoning up recollection, and he was still too weak to indulge in any prolonged train of thought.

His eyes fixed themselves now on some dim, faded family portrait, with features to which none of his early memories were attached; or on the waving boughs, blown by the wind athwart the casement—the straggling wreaths of ivy winding along the ledge.

There was something soothing in the murmuring play of the breeze, the song of the birds, and the distant sound of falling water, in the woodland—the still more far-off wash of the sea-waves; and he did not analyse the pleasurable sensations these sights and sounds inspired.

It was past mid-day before Richard St. Erme fully regained his consciousness. With a pang scarcely less bitter than that with which he had heard the Curlew's death-groan, he remembered that his vessel had struck upon the rocks, and that, one after another, he had seen his brave, faithful crew, borne away by the angry billows.

He was quite alone at present; but dim visions occasionally presented themselves of events which had occurred since he lay there, and of forms moving around him while he had been apparently insensible, and quite incapable of speech or movement. He felt that blood had been taken from him. His arm was stiff and bandaged; but, since the bleeding, his brain had been less oppressed. He was weak and ill now; but he was able to think clearly.

With the hand which was at liberty, he took from the table by the bedside a chased and enamelled gold watch, with a coat of arms at the back of the case. The languid

air which had characterised his movements hitherto, gave place to one of quick intelligence, as he examined the repeater. This curious relic of the past certainly exercised some strong influence over him who now held it in his nerveless hand. Vivid emotions were portrayed in his countenance as he pressed the spring, and heard the clear, bell-like voice within the golden case repeat the hour. The silvery clang seemed to carry him back to the days of his childhood. Yet there was nothing else in that strange, uncouth place to remind him of home.

He lay back, faint and wan, on the couch, as billows of troubled thoughts dashed over him, swelling and surging like the stormy ocean, on whose breast he had been lately tossing. Its murmur rang hoarsely in his ears—the beat of the wild waves keeping time with the ticking of the watch—delirium threatening to overpower him. He was not strong enough to bear the stormy floodtide of emotion which the sight of that ancient family relic had brought back.

He thought himself dreaming, when a voice which he knew quite well sounded cheerfully close to his ear, and a manly hand put back the curtain.

“Coming to yourself, eh? Well, you have had a precious bout of it! Drink this—

it's not poison; only an elixir of my own concoction. That's right. You'll get over it soon, but you must keep quiet. It won't do for you to prosecute your geological researches in the Valley of Hunter Gantick at present. You would not know an oolite from an ammonite! How do you feel yourself?"

"Better, since I heard your voice," replied Richard. "Upon my word, Dr. Lawrence, I began to think I was in an enchanted cave, or an inmate of Bedlam. Where on earth am I?"

"Best not to trouble your mind about that at this moment. Senses confused—eyes dull, and glazed! Upon my soul, young gentleman! I thought, when I first saw you, that there was concussion of the brain. But, as far as I can judge, after all, there's nothing very serious the matter with you. I dare say you feel as if every bone in your body was broken—compound fracture—dislocation of the joints—general scarification!—but it's nothing of the kind. You'll be as well as ever in a week, I give you my professional guarantee for it. That is, if nothing runs contrary to my experience, and the ordinary course of general practice."

"My life is scarcely worth the trouble you are taking," said the young officer, gloomily. "But for one consideration, I

would willingly have perished with the poor fellows who were drifted from my side by the current. Were none of them saved? Who told you that I was ill? How did you first learn that my vessel was lost?"

"Excuse me if I only answer one of your questions," said the Doctor, shaking his head gravely. "A foreign sailor delivered the message which brought me here. You know as much as I do about the shipwreck. The bare fact was all he communicated. Now rest satisfied. We may hear better tidings tomorrow. A patient just escaped from the jaws of death—if the people here had not bled you, you were, I declare it, on the verge of brain fever—has no business to be curious. Take another wineglass of the mixture, and keep quiet!"

Osborne obeyed him, as far as imbibing the cooling, refreshing liquid was concerned.

"I could drain the sea dry," he said; "and I am as impatient for news as I am thirsty. I am sure I shall not be better till you answer my questions."

"Thirst excessive; skin parched and dry; irritable, suspicious; sure symptoms of fever!" remarked the Camelford Doctor. "Were you at all conscious, while you lay with your eyes closed? Any strange sights and sounds? Noise in your ears like the sea

roaring?—lights flashing before the retina? Did you fancy there were people moving in the room, and want to speak to them, without being able to form an articulate utterance? Describe your sensations.”

“ Yes,” said Osborne, yielding involuntarily to the firm manner of his interlocutor. “ There have been strange shapes about me in the night. It was a positive relief to see you at my elbow. But I do not think it is of much use to talk about my feverish dreams. There was a woman sitting by me—an ill-dressed, unpleasant-looking creature—not a lady: neither was she like a common farmer’s wife or servant. She talked to herself, sometimes to me; and she wept when she looked at me. Then a tall, dark man—not a doctor, though I think he bled me; they spoke together, but I know not what they said. The only sentence which remains impressed upon my memory, is his saying that I should be better afloat, and that he should come back and fetch me. He seemed to be a seaman.”

“ Ha! yes; that is likely enough,” said Mr. Lawrence; who was, perhaps, indulging his habitual curiosity, while he inquired after his patient’s symptoms. “ What sort of man was he? Was his personal appearance remarkable?”

“ I think there was something about him that was out of the common way,” answered Osborne. “ Tall, dark, sunburnt; with eyes that had much thought in them, and a benevolent expression. I believe, too, that he spoke with a foreign accent. I should know the man again if I saw him.”

“ As I live, Jacob Mohr the smuggler!” exclaimed the Doctor, with animation; quite forgetting his previous desire to avoid agitating subjects. “ My dear sir! this is a very singular occurrence. Jacob Mohr is a man to be seen once in a lifetime; and to see him here, too! I declare I would not mind spending a night in this very room for the purpose.”

Osborne looked at him with languid astonishment.

“ Ah, Doctor, you have the advantage of me. You forget that I do not know under whose roof I have found shelter; not a very respectable one, if it harbours that audacious smuggling rascal! So, he has it in contemplation to take me on board *La Belle Marie*! She is still above water. I hoped she might have gone down when we lost sight of her last night.”

“ No, no; the smugglers are at home in the storm; they see better in the darkness,” said the Doctor. “ Upon my word, it was a

very curious spectacle when La Belle Marie came into Lezant harbour. The town was lit up to receive her. She shot into the creek, while you were working your way past the headlands. It was a near thing; for, of course, no light could be shown till she was within the windings of the inlet. She had a clever pilot on board, let me tell you! One who has known this coast from a boy. If you had heard the fellows at the Three Crowns cheer young Fleming as he went up the street! It was a rich cargo, you may be bound, that escaped the clutches of the Revenue lads, last night!"

"Not a doubt of it!" said Osborne, with intense mortification. "Excuse me, Doctor; but you are not taking, by any means, a right or pleasant view of the subject. It is very evident that, like all the men in this part of the country, you are a smuggler at heart."

"Oh, come, nonsense! you are too hard upon us, Lieutenant!" said the surgeon, reddening. "Professional business took me to Lezant to see a lodger of Mrs. Brock's; a patient of mine, who has had a relapse. I had no conception I should find such an uproar in the street. It was as if a great fair was going on; and, in that black night, the pavement was as bright as noon-day—all the hill-folk, in spite of the rain and thunder,

going to and fro. It was a sight worth seeing once in one's life, I assure you."

"I am obliged to them!" said Osborne, bitterly. "Half their exultation, no doubt, was owing to our misfortune. While these lawless rogues were shouting and carousing, my vessel was drifting to its doom. Did the news reach Lezant, while you were there, that the Cutter had gone upon the rocks?"

"No," answered Mr. Lawrence; "the tidings had not been received then. The people were heart and soul engaged in landing the schooner's freight. Well, I shall tell you nothing about what became of the goods. I am not going to turn informer. Half my practice lies among these honest gentry. Besides, I had nothing to do with the transaction. I sat talking to Simon Brock, in his ingle-nook, while the bustle was hottest. Would it at all interest you to hear the particulars of the accident he met with, when he fell over the cliffs, eighteen years ago? I assure you, it was a most extraordinary case."

"Very likely," said Osborne, drily. "But I think we will defer it for the present. I am scarcely equal to understanding these details to-day."

"Just as you like! Ah, you are lamentably indolent! You know I told you before, when you tried to shirk visiting my museum

at Camelford, that you should never neglect opportunities of gaining information. Perhaps it may stimulate your curiosity, if I tell you that the night Simon Brock fell over Lezant headland, was the same when Captain Fleming was murdered; and that this old cripple, as he is now — then the finest man in the county — was engaged in assisting to run a cargo ashore from the brig Nautilus. Her skipper was the famous smuggler, Gervase Helier; — ‘French Jerry,’ the men used to call him; brother, or, it has been said, foster-brother, to Mrs. Fleming’s second husband, Lord Boscawen’s tenant at the Manor Farm.”

Osborne raised his head, and looked eagerly at the Doctor. “Was this man’s evidence taken at Colonel St. Erme’s trial?” he asked. “I never heard before that there was a smuggling vessel off the coast.”

“Nor did I know it,” replied Mr. Lawrence. “I question whether any person at that time associated the idea of poor Fleming’s murder with the illegal acts of the freetraders. It struck me, after I heard from the mate of La Belle Marie that the two Heliers were noted smugglers, that the old fellow, the landlord of the Three Crowns, had been in the same line of business; and that, most probably, he could tell me some interesting facts about the French Brothers. It is wonderful

how much you may gather from people, if you humour their idiosyncrasy. I am afraid you, my young friend, would not have listened so patiently as I did, to the old fellow's rambling reminiscences. He was sitting alone and quiet enough; but outside, the tumult in the street was incessant. The scene passing under the windows reminded him of old times, and of the landing of the goods from the Nautilus. He was set to watch on the cliffs, and saw the French Brothers meet and kiss each other; a strange thing, he thought, for blackbearded men to do; but he heard it was the fashion of their country. They went off to Woods together, and he was left to look out for the enemy. The smugglers kept the whole affair close, and, I will answer for it, Dame Brock and the lad Andrew never told that the old man fell over the cliff while he was making signals to the brig. It is sufficient for our purpose that she was off the coast that night, and that Simon Brock saw her skipper, French Jerry, and Jean Helier, on shore together. But there is another curious circumstance I should like to mention confidentially. Just let me feel your pulse— Ah! fluctuating, but a trifle stronger. Tell me, if my talking is too much for you."

"Go on," said Osborne, striving to speak

composedly. "I assure you it does me good, rather than harm, to listen to you."

"Take a little more of the medicine—it won't hurt you. Well, yes; I think I may venture. You need not trouble yourself to make any observation; only lie still and listen quietly. A few nights ago, I was called in professionally to attend Mr. Hearnshaw—Lord Boscawen's agent—an old friend as well as patient. I found him suffering from acute rheumatism, caught, he inferred, from driving in the damp mist to Lezant from the Manor-house among the woods. He never, he said, visited that place without discomfort. The steward told me that the old nobleman's health was at last breaking, and that he seemed very much out of spirits. 'Mark my words, Hearnshaw,' he had said, in his last letter from Florence, 'when I am gone, that woman's children will come forward and declare I married her.' He alluded to the French lady who once resided with him at the Grange. Now, Hearnshaw and I knew quite well that this was his Lordship's sore point. Whether he felt that, were she mistress or wife, he had treated her badly, and, consequently, disliked being reminded of the connexion, I cannot say; but he was always sensitive on that subject.

“Mr. Hearnshaw said that instructions had been given him to look out for Jacob Mohr’s vessel. He had reason to believe that this foreign smuggler was the very man from whom Lord Boscawen, in his weaker moments, anticipated annoyance. Now, French Jerry—another smuggling alias—was formerly said to be the son of the lady I have mentioned. His reputed father was Helier the contrebandler, who assisted Madame in her evasion; and, if all tales are true, married her after she left Lord Boscawen. The steward—a shrewd man in his way—is convinced that the captain of La Belle Marie is one and the same with the bold skipper who ran the Nautilus into Lezant harbour, on a moonlight night, eighteen years ago. Well, I don’t much like to advise you to trust such a fellow as Jacob Mohr too far; but I must say, to gratify a laudable curiosity like that burning within me at this moment, I would take my chance, and go afloat with him. He is a better fellow, I believe, than this black-browed villain. They are not much like brothers.”

Osborne turned himself round with an effort, and grasped Mr. Lawrence’s hand. The surgeon got up hastily.

“Upon my word, I believe I have done you a great deal of harm! you will be in a

burning fever, if you do not take care. Suppose I give you a composing draught? Don't think any more about these matters till your head is stronger."

"Can you solve me a riddle?" said the young officer, fixing his eyes, bright with feverish anxiety, on the Doctor's face. "How came this old repeating watch, which I remember quite well to have been my father's—if you have any doubt about it, here are the arms and crest of the St. Ermes on the inside of the case—how came this family relic, with which I have played as a child, to be in this house? I saw it in the hand of the woman who was watching by me."

Mr. Lawrence took the watch, and examined it attentively. "That question I can by no means answer," he said: "Mrs. Helier was your nurse through the night."

"This, then, is the Manor Farm at Woods?" said Richard, as a still brighter flush suffused his fair complexion. "Is there not still a French lady residing here?"

"Bless my soul! I told you so—the fever is coming strongly upon you!" exclaimed the surgeon, hastily mixing an anodyne. "There, drink that! My poor young friend, if you have seen any foreign lady, I am afraid it was the spirit of Madame, whose finery hangs in yonder wardrobe,

that has visited your slumbers. You are right about the place: I did not like to mention it before; but this is the Grange—Lord Boscawen's family place. So you really thought you saw the French lady? Were her clothes dripping wet, or had she a headless baby on her arm? You were most probably dreaming."

"No!" said Osborne; "I have seen only a poor miserable woman—Helier's wife, Fleming's widow. I do not wish to say more of her. The French lady whose image may have visited my dreams is not a spirit, but a reality; still, it is perhaps best that we should not meet at present. Now, give me that potion; anything that will make me fit to carry out the purpose I have in view."

He took the medicine from the Doctor's hand, and drank it with feverish avidity; then turned his face to the wall as if he wanted rest, and was not in the humour for further conversation. The thoughts which at first coursed rapidly through his brain in wild confusion subsided, after Mr. Lawrence's departure, into calmness under the influence of the strong soporific he had taken; and, for some time, the ghost-chamber was profoundly quiet. Neither real nor spiritual visitants disturbed his slumbers.

CHAPTER VII.

THE narrow passages of the old Grange were still dark, though the day was breaking, when Mohr passed through them, after leaving the Lieutenant's chamber. His usually inscrutable countenance, now that he was alone, denoted the working of strong inward feeling. The spell which hung over the occupants of the haunted room at Woods was upon him.

As he stepped into the open air, Bouffe sprang forward from behind a stone heap in the small courtyard encumbered with the ruins of the desecrated chapel, whence there was a door opening into the orchard. The dog did not bark, but whined low, and fawned upon his old master. Mohr spoke to him in French, and the dog responded by animated but silent caresses; then he ran back into the enclosure. The smuggler, perhaps, heard a few soft words in the same language he had used, and knew that the Breton girl was near him. He cast a quick glance round, and then followed the water-spaniel through the archway.

“Ah, c’est vous, Monsieur Mohr! A thousand times welcome!” said Reine, coming forward, and giving him her hand frankly. “Is the little schooner, La Belle Marie, safe? All night I have been dreaming of her. I knew that Monsieur Fleming went to pilot her along the coast; he left Bouffe with me, and the dog was as restless as myself. Then the thunder woke me, pealing through the woods. As soon as the rain ceased, I came out; it was impossible for me to rest: I feared some misfortune had befallen you.”

“Merci, Mademoiselle,” said Mohr, gratefully; “my vessel is safe in Lezant harbour. But you are right; it has been an awful night. Many poor sailors have needed your prayers. I should not like often to pass through such a time of trial. But for Herr Fleming’s good seamanship, we might not have escaped its perils.”

Reine’s bright eyes swam in tears. “Ah! your life is full of danger. I should have been so sorry!” she said, simply. “But, Monsieur, I have a prayer to make to you. Once you gave me a promise to take me back to France. I cannot—I dare not stop in this house. Night and day, there is no peace. I am certain there have been wicked deeds committed at this old Grange. There is reason

for the dread with which, when I first heard the place named, it was said to be regarded. I have lost heart. All night I lie and listen; cries — oaths — break the dreary silence of these gloomy woods. It is not fancy; all the long hours of darkness that tortured soul complained; one might go mad if this lasted. For the sake of my parents who loved you, when you return to Brittany, do not leave me behind! take me with you!”

Mohr listened to her with compassion.

“Mein Kind!” he said, gently; “you are too tender-hearted for this house. You are right; it is not without good cause that its evil name has been gained. But, this time, I cannot do your bidding. La Belle Marie will work her way round the headlands at sunset; with the morning dawn we must trim our sails, and stretch across the Channel. You could not be ready at such short notice.”

“Oh, yes, I will be ready; I do not wish to sleep another night under this roof!” exclaimed Reine, passionately. “When I first came, I hoped to be a comfort to my cousin, to teach the little girls; but they run away from me: no one will heed whether I come or go; it is but to say farewell. At any hour you appoint, I will go with you.”

“It cannot be,” said Mohr, gravely. “I

am sorry to disappoint you, Mademoiselle, but what you ask is simply impossible. You know my vessel; it is small, and the accommodation with which it was your good pleasure to be contented is not now at my disposal. What has terrified you so much is not any supernatural visitation; I have heard from Lance Fleming of the trouble and alarm occasioned in this household by the delirious cries of one of my crew. The mate of La Belle Marie, whom I left ashore because he had a fever, experienced a relapse on account of the disturbance given him by a report that the Custom-house spies had discovered his hiding-place. He was brought here for a time to await my return, and to-night will be carried on board the vessel. My cabin will be given up to him; we shall not have an inch of spare room to offer to any passenger."

Reine's countenance was full of the divinest compassion.

"I am ashamed of my foolish terrors," she said. "Why did you not ask me to nurse him? Pauvre homme! how kind he was to me on board your vessel, and when he brought me on shore! Let me go to him at once."

"No, no!" said Mohr, hurriedly; "that will not do: he is in good hands. Do not go into that part of the house at present; it is

not safe. Bist eine junge, schöne Mädchen. All day there will be men coming and going from the schooner. You must not enter that Schlafzimmer."

"Why not?" said Reine. "I have no fears of the French sailors. When I came over, if I was ill or frightened, in the little cabin, when the waves ran high, they would look in and comfort me, say one kind word, and go to their duties. I should be to them like one of the Sœurs de Charité in our own land, if I nursed their sick comrade. Herr Mohr, there is no other woman in this house who can take proper care of him, or see that he has what he wants for the voyage. It is quite useless to forbid my going to him."

Mohr was greatly embarrassed. "Be advised, Mademoiselle!" he said, earnestly. "I assure you that he has all things necessary, and that it is best for him to remain quiet. I have myself provided for his comfort. Will you not trust me?"

She looked at him with some surprise. "Yes, since you require it so seriously. I know that your men, when sick, are not neglected. I have heard them talk of your great kindness. Still," she said, looking up at the ivied window which overhung the courtyard, "I wish it had been otherwise. I fancy, if I hear cries again from that chamber, as I did a

few days ago, I must enter it. All has been quiet lately."

"He is better now. The danger has passed," said Mohr. "If it were not so, I would not bar that threshold to you."

"They should not have placed the poor sick sailor *there*," said Reine, pointing to the window. "If I had had any voice in the matter, I would have prevented it. When he was well and strong, I heard him say he would not sleep in that room for worlds. Sometimes, though there is no breeze stirring, there comes a sound through that window, when not a leaf rustles, which Leah says — and I no longer feel inclined to contradict her — is my poor countrywoman's singing. I hear the low chords of her harpsichord as she plays, and now and then a whirring in the air, when a string breaks. Ah, you must not laugh, Herr Mohr! — I am very, very sad. Sometimes, I feel as if my heart was breaking, as hers did in this triste séjour. Monsieur Fleming gave me her letters to read, and turn into English for him. It was not a cheerful task, but I have done it. They are ready for him when he pleases to ask for them. She was very lonely, and I do not believe that her husband ever came back to her. I think there was something sadder and darker in her story than is told in the letters, though they, at the last, are

gloomy and hopeless enough. I fear that poor wife and her baby were deserted. No wonder she haunts the place. I would rather not die here. I should not like to be condemned to wander up and down this gloomy pile of ruins, and to sit weeping on these stone heaps, where I was foolish enough, after copying her sad letters, to fancy I saw her lamenting and wringing her hands yesterday. You see, I am a coward! I am not fit to stay here. I feel lonely and deserted, like that poor French-woman, with no one to care for me. Do not forget, Herr Mohr, when you sail away with the morning tide, that you leave your old friend's child very desolate in England!"

"I shall remember," said Mohr, with emotion. "I do not lightly forget those who have claims, such as yours, upon me. But you are not like that deserted wife, Mademoiselle Reine. You have loving friends and future joys before you. I have heard that, young as you are, you have already pledged yourself. Is this true? Will you not confide in me, Reine?"

His kindly, truthful accent re-assured the drooping girl. "Eh bien! it is as you say, Mynheer," she answered. "What you knew of my father will, at least, make you believe that at his board and hearth all who were lonely and cheerless found a welcome; and the

English boy, away from his own people and country, was at home and happy in our house. We had, too, a good pastor—we were Huguenots—and he, Richard, mon ami, he was of the same faith. His sunny temper made him friends, but that was all. Ah, he had no fine vessel, then—no gay uniform, no proud flag waving above his head! He was a poor discarded boy, with the shadow of a dark cloud upon him. For the sin of others, he was cut off from his own home and kindred. He had an ancient, honourable name, but he dared not proclaim it. I did not know all then, but now I love him the better for it! I cannot tell where he is at present, but I believe that you are right—I am not, like that poor French lady, forgotten. Some day, I trust, we shall be happy together. It may not be for a long time. He has troubles which, as yet, he is unwilling that I should share. We are both young—we must wait. *Le bon temps viendra!*”

As she turned blushing away, Mohr took her hand gravely. “Be it so!” he said; “I will not retard it. *Bist eine treue, herzliche Weib!* For this time, Mademoiselle, I must bid you farewell. Very soon the Government vessels will be in hot pursuit of the schooner; but *La Belle Marie* has wings when she chooses to use them. Tell your cousin that I

shall perform his commission more promptly than he has bargained for, and be off the coast again with the next flood-tide. Bid him trim the light at Porth Hern, and keep a sharp look-out, or it may be the worse for him. Be prepared, Reine, for Richard's sake, to start at such brief notice as I can afford; and do not let your next thought of me be an angry one."

Bouffe would have followed him out of the orchard, but Mynheer sent the dog back with more asperity than was common with him. He walked swiftly in the grey dawn along the pathway towards Lezant, his mind full of emotions called forth by Reine's words, but tinged with a strong colouring of remorse, which she had not intended them to inspire.

In the stir and tumult of quickly passing events, he had, perhaps, as yet scarcely realised the dire consequences to others of what had been to him a night of successful triumph. The image which he had charitably refrained from bringing before the girl, of her lover, the young officer, in his present state of sickness and depression, mingled with the picture she had drawn of his deserted childhood in France. Mohr, with his kind heart and quick sensibility, felt, while Reine's pathetic accents lingered in his ear, as though he were as responsible for all this misery as he was for the loss

of the vessel which had gone upon Tintagel rocks, when in chase of his schooner.

Mynheer stopped only when he came to the gate which opened upon the cliff from the Parsonage grounds, and stood for a few moments listening to the murmur of the waves, the hum of the bees among the richly-scented beds of gorse upon the down, and the matin song of the birds in the Rector's garden. As the smuggler leaned against the palings, there were softer thoughts in his mind than had previously been his companions; visions, probably, of his birthplace in some far-off land; while the summer morning broke in its freshness over the Cornish moors, and the sea woke up into foaming brightness in the early sunshine. Jacob Mohr's eyes, full of meditative regret, wandered over that beautiful landscape, taking in the deep wooded ravine running up into the land,—the steep black rocks sinking sheer down into the water,—the silent church tower, from which no merry peal ever rang out,—and the picturesque, dilapidated buildings of Lezant town.

The last objects on which Mynheer's glance rested were the raking masts of La Belle Marie; and casting away the thoughts that had troubled him, he strode hastily down the rocky steps. He stopped for an instant at the Three Crowns, where he left a message for

Lance Fleming, who had not passed the night at the Grange ; and spoke with his usual kindness to the mate of his vessel, who was sunning himself in the porch, and declared that he was now fit for active duty.

Mohr then walked rapidly through the long street of the town, careless of observation, though all its inhabitants turned out to look at the celebrated foreign smuggler ; and went at once on board his vessel. The anchor was lifted immediately, and passing safely out of the rocky inlet, she dropped slowly down the coast to the old landing-place at Porth Hern.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE first rumour of the wreck of the Curlew reached Lezant just when, that night of mad revelry past, cooler reflection set in. The better-disposed among the townspeople—decidedly the minority—were shocked at the fate which had befallen the Government vessel. Even the riotous frequenters of Dame Brock's hostelry, though fiercely exultant, rejoiced uneasily. They felt that the very ground they trod upon—the cellars which had been safe hiding-places for fifty years—were now insecure; and dreaded the strict investigation likely to ensue into the causes of the loss of the Revenue cruiser, and the fate of her crew and young commander.

It was said that not a man on board the cutter had escaped. The planks of the Curlew strewed the beach under Arthur's Castle; and already spoilers were busily at work on the strand searching for plunder from the wreck. At Lezant there was, at that time, no Preventive Station; and the solitary exciseman was

afraid of encountering violent opposition if he tried to protect the Crown property. He had not shown his face in the street, and, in fact, was prudently gone to Camelford, to give notice of the disaster which had occurred, and petition for the assistance of some of the Revenue force to aid him in the discharge of his duty.

All the front shutters of the Boscawen were closed, out of respect for the young officer ; and Mrs. Price and the children were crying bitterly in the kitchen. Morgan kept up a more manly semblance, but his heart was sore within him. He went from room to room, pretending to be busy, but he could do nothing. Every occupation to which he tried to apply himself was insufficient to turn his thoughts from the loss of the cutter. Osborne's cheerful face rose before him when he entered what was usually called "the Lieutenant's room." The honest fellow put it in order as carefully as if the officer were expected to take possession immediately. More than once, as he brushed the crumbs off the carpet, he furtively, with the back of his hand, rubbed away a fallen tear.

There had been no customers at the new inn the night before ; but, towards the middle of the day, a few began to drop in. Price attended to the horses, and bustled

about diligently ; till at last, after holding conversation with a person who had just come in from the country, he relaxed from his exertions. It was necessary for him, he told his wife, to go out on business ; but he should not be away long.

He could not resist, after he had dressed himself, looking in upon her, as she was serving in the bar, and telling her to keep up her spirits.

“ It’s not to be believed that all hands were lost. Come, cheer up, lass ! I shall bring you better news, I trust, when I come back from the Parsonage. Mr. St. Erme is a magistrate, and, whether he likes it or not, he must bestir himself. But there’s no saying—he has been odder than ever lately. I don’t think he’s quite sane at times. At any rate, I won’t mention what I’ve heard just now to a soul, before I’ve asked his opinion about it. Now leave off crying, youngsters, and help mother to get dinner ready against I come back.”

He strode off cheerily, taking his way by the short cut to Lezant Rectory. Mrs. Price dried her eyes, and set the little ones to shell peas and pare potatoes, while she went about her domestic duties quietly, but with a better heart.

Though not easily accessible, Mr. St. Erme

was always coldly courteous to his parishioners, who, to do them justice, troubled him but seldom. After a brief delay, Morgan Price was shown into his study; and requested to sit down. The Rector appeared to be occupied in making copious extracts from a folio volume before him; but he laid down his pen on the young innkeeper's entrance, and lifting his pale, delicately-featured countenance from his task, requested to know his business.

Price felt singularly embarrassed. He had not reflected much, as he came along, on the best way of opening the subject. His mind had been engrossed by the tidings he had just received. It was the common talk of the town that the clergyman and the young naval officer were uncle and nephew; but Mr. St. Erme had never acknowledged the relationship. His calm manner made the task of breaking what could not but be painful news infinitely more distressing. He did not offer the smallest assistance to his perplexed visitor, but, leaning back in his chair, with his usual appearance of haughty languor, awaited in silence his reply.

“I am sorry to trouble you, Sir,” said Price, at last; “but there is sad news come into the town, of a shipwreck on the coast. The fine cutter which was in Lezant harbour a few weeks ago, went on the rocks below

Tintagel in the fog. It was said, at first, that all hands had perished; but this, I am thankful to say, turns out to be an exaggeration. There is hope that her officer is safe, but he is very ill. I am afraid, too," he added in a lower tone, "that he is in bad hands. It is on this point that I come to ask for your advice."

He paused, but Mr. St. Erme remained silent. Price fancied that, if possible, his face had become more deadly white, but he did not otherwise betray emotion. He placed the ivory paper-knife he was holding between the leaves of the open volume before him, and closed it, as if not disposed at present to proceed with his studies. After waiting for a moment, Price went on:—

"A person, who gives no name—the same from whom the Lieutenant got intelligence where the schooner was to land her cargo—has written to me to say, that, when the cutter went to pieces, her officer was washed ashore, and that he lies much hurt, but not dead, thank God! at the old Manor-house. Fooks, the miller's man from Trevena, called at Woods on his way down here this morning, and gave me this note, which had been dropped among the sacks of flour in his cart."

Price placed in the clergyman's hand a piece of soiled tinted paper, which Mr. St. Erme

took with a gesture of repugnance. He did not hold it even for a moment in his fingers, but laid it upon the darkly-bound closed volume before him. Though the communication was a very brief one, it seemed to take him some time to decipher, or else he was occupied with his own reflections, for still he spoke not. Price came a step nearer to the table, and said respectfully,—

“ I do not like to be officious, but anything I can do, Sir, is at your command. We are all fond of Lieutenant Osborne. My wife and little ones have been crying all morning since they heard he was drowned. That fear is over, if what is written on that paper is true; but still I cannot say that I feel at all easy about him. Woods is not like any other place, and Jean Helier is scarcely like other men. The schooner's freight was consigned to him, and he is said to have had a hand in showing the false signals which brought the cutter on the rocks. This may not be true, but still I would not trust him. Give us a warrant to fetch the Lieutenant away from that house, and I will find honest men enough to execute it, even in Lezant. But pray, Sir,” he added earnestly, “ let no time be lost. You see there is a talk among these wicked smugglers, if that scrawl is to be believed, of taking the officer on board La Belle Marie.

She sailed out of port this morning with the early tide. Young Lance Fleming piloted her in, and is known to be hand-and-glove with her captain. It seems a strange, bold scheme, but I dare say they think no one is aware that Lieutenant Osborne escaped drowning. No more we should be, but for this scrap of writing. There is no saying what harm may happen if they are allowed to have their own way."

Mr. St. Erme, when his visitor paused again, answered him without hesitation,—

"You have in this matter, Mr. Price, acted with great judgment. I thank you for this information, which I have little doubt may be relied upon. I believe, however, there is no occasion to trouble you farther. You had better leave this paper with me. I wish you good morning."

The last words were spoken with visible impatience, but Price did not move.

"Can I not help you, Sir?" he said. "I would do anything in the world for the Lieutenant, and you may need a willing hand or two to send on this errand."

"No, no! my good friend," answered Mr. St. Erme, bending forward, and again perusing the open paper. "I am quite prepared. There is not the slightest occasion to embroil you with your neighbours. You have done

your part, and may leave the rest to me. What has to be done must, as you recommend, take place quickly. I am sorry that I have not another moment to spare for conversation."

He rang the bell as he spoke, but Price stood his ground firmly.

"I am certain, Sir," he said, "that you do not know the difficulty of the task you are undertaking, and that you will scarcely find another man in Lezant as ready to aid you as myself. Most of our townsfolk and country neighbours are either in league with or desperately afraid of the smugglers. The exciseman is gone to Camelford to get help from the Revenue police. Shall I send him and the men he brings back with him to you for orders?"

A slight haughty glow suffused Mr. St. Erme's pale complexion.

"My friend," he said, "you have done your duty. I will not trouble you to teach me mine. Neither do I wish you to send any more of the Lezant people to my house. Again, I must bid you good morning."

Price had no farther excuse for lingering, but he was very far from feeling satisfied. As he moved reluctantly to the door, at which Mr. St. Erme's servant was standing, ready to show him out, he saw that the clergyman's

eyes were again bent upon the table. He had re-opened his book, and was tapping the page before him impatiently with the paper-cutter. Price bowed to him, and went silently away. He would have given the world to get back the note he had brought, but he did not venture to ask for it.

Mr. St. Erme remained in exactly the same attitude for several minutes after Price had left him. His eyes wandered absently over the writing on the scroll, the faint odour it emitted annoyed his fastidious senses;—he pushed it from him with an air of intense disgust, and sat still perusing it, but from a greater distance. Then he rose up, and, opening his door, desired the servant who had just let the landlord of the Boscawen Arms out of the house, to tell Miss St. Erme that he wished to speak to her. He then went back to his seat, folded up the paper and put it in a drawer of his writing-table, and waited for his niece.

She came so quickly in obedience to his summons that her light footfall at the door seemed like the echo of the heavier tread of his previous visitor, which had only just died away on the threshold. Mary's belief, that some important communication was to be made to her, was confirmed when she saw her uncle's harassed face, altered, she observed,

since the morning. She stood before him without speaking, but he was satisfied with the expression of her countenance.

“It is well,” he said. “I see you are in some measure prepared. Have you reflected, Mary, on what I said to you, some weeks since, concerning the possibility of my asking you to visit the old house among Lord Boscawen’s woods, to which I once went on a fruitless errand? The time is come for me to claim the fulfilment of your promise.”

He spoke very calmly, but there was a wild gleam in his fatigued, deep-set eyes. Mary went up close to his side and kissed him tenderly. Of late there had been less estrangement than formerly, and a better understanding had sprung up between them. She said only,—

“I have not forgotten one word of yours, dear uncle, and I am ready at all times to do your bidding.”

Mr. St. Erme hesitated. Her prompt obedience made him, for an instant, less inclined to send her where even the disturbed state of his mind could not prevent his seeing that distress, if not danger, must be encountered. The next moment, the ruling passion, strong as death, resumed its mastery over him.

“Listen to me,” he said, “as calmly as you can, Mary, while I tell you that Richard

has been unfortunate enough to lose his vessel. The Curlew was wrecked in the fog last night on the rocks near Porth Hern. Your brother, I am thankful to say, escaped death, but he lies very ill at Lord Boscawen's old Grange. Mary! I am not insensible to this calamity," he continued, as her tears fell fast, in spite of every effort to stop them; "but do you not perceive the hand of Providence in this matter? For weeks and months I have striven in vain to find any sufficient cause for sending you to that house, and inducing its inhospitable inmates to admit you. And now the opportunity presents itself, as it were, unsought. No one will deny your claim to nurse your brother. Richard will recover. I do not believe he is in danger. I am convinced that this fatal shipwreck—his being carried to that house—the thought which immediately flashed into my brain of sending you to attend upon him—are the appointed means of clearing your father's memory from the heavy load of calumny which rests upon it. Do not let your pure mind be clouded by turbulent passions. Even this natural grief must be subdued. Eyes blinded by tears, senses dulled by earthly sorrow, cannot perceive the faint signs by which the revelations from the unseen world reach us. The incorporeal essences of Fleming and his supposed

murderer—your father—will be near you at Woods. Take with you the clear, untroubled instinct of girlhood. Be ready to call upon the invisible ones—to wrestle strongly against them in spiritual conflict, and you will prevail. My prayers, my searching, agonizing conflicts with the powers of evil, will prepare the way for you. Be strong in spirit as you are pure of heart, and the victory will be yours. Now go at once—delay but weakens our resolutions. A servant shall attend you to the gates of the Manor Farm. He must not go beyond them. May all good spirits defend you!”

He kissed her white forehead with unusual tenderness. Mary made no protest against his half-mad injunctions. She had prayed fervently, and a clearer view of what might be demanded of her in the future had been granted, but she did not now press it upon him. Above all things, she longed to be with Richard—ill, alone in that unfriendly house. She trembled lest an incautious word might induce her uncle to rescind the permission he had given; and while his visionary fancies met with less sympathy from her than formerly, she yet cherished a strong impression that the mystery which had darkened her whole past existence would be made plain to her at Woods.

CHAPTER IX.

THE smuggling schooner rode at anchor, rocked by the ever-turbulent waves which break in a long line of foam on the strand, at the foot of Arthur's Castle. Her boats might be seen passing to and fro, during the afternoon, between the vessel and the beach; but there was no great sign of activity on board, and nothing indicative of precaution. Danger, at present, was not apprehended, for the shore was strewn with the wreck of Osborne's cutter. The inhabitants of that remote district were, generally speaking, friends to the contraband traffic; and no Revenue cruiser could as yet be signalled, by the vigilant scouts who kept watch day and night on those stormy headlands, as on its way to take the place of the Curlew.

Wave after wave broke with increasing tumult on the level sand beneath the black, over-arching rocks, and ran up, as the tide rose, into the dark-browed caverns. *La Belle Marie* rose and fell with the strong current;

straining her cable, and, every now and then, jerking her anchor almost out of its bed, as the rolling floods swept past and underneath her. Still, she held firmly; and as she swung round with the tide, her graceful, sweeping sides, and curved bows and figure-head, seemed to bend in loving play to meet the billows that curled up, more, one would have said, in anger than in sport against her.

An hour after sunset, La Belle Marie was ready to sail; but she still swung at her anchor, while the evening shadows crept darkly over the waters. Her Captain personally superintended all the necessary preparations, examined into the state of bolt and cable, and entered anxiously into every minute particular on which might depend the safety of his vessel in a stormy sea. He did not forget to inquire into the condition of the sick man who had been brought on board from the old inn at Lezant. The sea-breeze had already invigorated his languid frame, and Mohr's kind, cheerful words refreshed his heart.

This done, the skipper ordered a boat to be manned; and in the twilight, with half-a-dozen trusty followers, left the schooner. Jacob Mohr did not utter a syllable, as the long, narrow, canoe-like craft cut through the dark waters. His men, perceiving that

he was not in a mood to brook disturbance, bent silently over their oars. It was a still evening, and the wind had ceased to drive the waves upon the coast. It was very seldom that they rose and fell so quietly on the strand at the mouth of the ravine.

The deep, almost impervious thicket, which choked up the dell, offered many obstructions, but did not stop the progress of the men, though no track was discoverable, and it was dark when they got among the bushes. One out of the number had threaded the labyrinth before, and his memory served him well. It was more difficult for the sailors to follow their leader, encumbered as they were by a litter constructed before leaving the vessel. They had to hew a way amidst the brambles with axe and hatchet, before they could pass through the wood with their burden.

Mohr ordered a halt, when, through the boughs, the old Manor-house became dimly visible, and proceeded towards it alone. The hour was, in fact, not late, but the thunder-clouds hung heavily in the sky; and now and then a quivering sheet of pale flame flashed from the dark curtain which was beginning to drop down behind the trees. High up in the haunted room, as Mohr crossed the courtyard, a light was burning

steadily. The smuggler gazed round him and listened intently, but nothing was stirring. He then, with a slow step and an anxious mind, entered the building in the same way he had formerly done under Lance Fleming's guidance.

Mary St. Erme had met with none of the uncouth and frightful objects which imagination had conjured up as likely to be encountered at a place so shunned by all as Boscawen's Grange. In the summer evening, as she approached, before the storm lightened and darkened the woods—with the golden-tinted clouds gleaming through the trees—the old grey stonework and shadowy avenue wore a melancholy, faded beauty. On the threshold she had been met—not by the dark, scowling recreant, Helier, nor the once pretty, but now wan and wasted, mistress of the Grange; but by a young and beautiful girl, who, on hearing her errand, had courteously invited her to enter. As Reine flitted before her through the long passages, Mary's heart warmed towards her. But for the necessity of checking any feeling which might interfere with her mission at Woods, she would have taken the young foreigner into her confidence, and asked her to share her vigil; but this might have defeated her purpose.

She recognised her uncle's description of the ghost-chamber at Woods, in the room to which she was shown, with the evening sunlight tinging the edges of heavy, overhanging clouds, and stealing in through the ivy-leaves round the casement. The old, faded pictures—the deep wood-carvings and dark cabinets, with their salient angles casting shadows on the walls—the funereal canopy of the couch, were all as she had imagined them, and there her survey ended; for, stretched on the bed, in a deep, death-like sleep, was her only brother. Mary drew near softly, and ventured to take hold of the nerveless fingers resting on the counterpane. Though no pressure was returned, the touch of his hand comforted her. There was warmth and life under the surface, and she looked with less terror and agony, though her tears fell fast, at his blanched, motionless features.

As she stood beside him, longing to see those sealed eyelids unclose, a thousand painful recollections rushed upon her. Their melancholy childhood at Lezant Rectory, darkened by the gloom even then gathering over her uncle's mind; the unreasonable dislike he had taken to the boy who reminded him of his handsome, gifted brother; her subsequent separation from Richard, and the prohibition of all intercourse between them,

till now, when she was sent to attend on what might be his deathbed;—all these, and many other sad reflections, were awakened by the sight of that pale, unconscious figure, lying where she remembered, with a shudder, to have heard that the corpse of Fleming had once rested.

The sunlight died away;—the long shadows were merged in universal gloom. As the room grew dark, vivid lightning began to play in the murky atmosphere. Mary lighted the lamp on the table, and sat down by it on the side farthest from the window. She tried to familiarise herself with every object in the room—the gloomy pictures, the heavy cabinets, the arras waving before the entrance to the old-fashioned dressing-closet. There was no sound but an occasional low growl of distant thunder. The absolute silence was more trying to her thrilling nerves, than the noises which usually disturbed the occupants of that remote chamber.

Mary drew from under her cloak the Bible she had brought with her, and began to read it. Sometimes, in a low tone, she read some favourite verse aloud; but her own voice, hushed as it was, startled her. It seemed to awake an echo in the room. Once, she distinctly heard a word repeated.

She sat quite silently for some time afterwards, listening; but nothing was now audible, except the ticking of an antique gold watch on a stand at her elbow, and Richard's soft, unlaboured breathing.

The storm had passed over the house without lightening the air. Even the night-loving birds had sought shelter from the rain in crannies of this old, ivy-covered wing of the building. Not a bat flapped its wing against the casement, not an owl skimmed over the low grassy mounds of the courtyard, or hooted its loud cry in the thicket. The stillness was very oppressive.

Nevertheless, the young girl was not alone with her brother. From the dark aperture of the entrance to the secret passage, a man, wrapped in a seaman's cloak, had been for some time watching her intently. The light of the lamp fell on the open page of the sacred volume, on Mary's golden hair and pure forehead. The dark shadows, cast over most of the other objects in the large room, threw out the soft outlines of her face and form with Rembrandt-like distinctness.

Perhaps the picture reminded the Dutchman of the pale, flaxen-haired Madonnas in his cabin, whom he was said, by the sailors, to worship. The fair, soft tresses gleamed, as if tinged with a glory. The spiritual coun-

tenance, full of meek serenity, yet with that sense of something better, holier still, not fully realised as yet, but in firm faith anticipated, were more than human in their beauty. The sweet, womanly tenderness with which, when at last she turned her head, Mary's glance rested on her brother—all these conjured up for the man contemplating these two young creatures, such a vision of love and happiness, even on earth, that, little as it might apparently concern one, sin and sorrow-scathed like himself, the fiercest pang of envy, which had ever darted through his mind, assailed him.

A sound, it might be the rising wind, but it resembled a sigh, startled Mary. She looked at Richard; but he had not stirred. His breathing was so light, that it would scarce have moved a feather. Yet once again she heard it—a deep throb of agony, to which her own soul responded. Her soft eyes strove to pierce the shadowy recesses of the chamber. Her colour, instead of receding, became brighter; her glance more free from trouble.

“Father!” she said, “I am here to listen. Your child does not fear you. Let me hear your voice!”

As she looked, with a beating heart, into the dark, far-off corner of the apartment, a

shadowy form gradually became present to her senses. For a moment her courage failed her. Mary St. Erme put out her hand to rouse her brother; but a rapid, cautioning gesture of the shrouded figure, stopped her. She remembered, just in time, that suddenly to dispel that deep, healing slumber, might be fatally dangerous: and she resolved to abide the issue.

Meanwhile, the smuggler approached the bed, and bent over the slumberer. As Mary's eyes received the image of that face, full of resolute determination—the deep, well-opened hazel eyes—the firmly-cut mouth—the features, to which a strange conflict of feeling was lending dignity, as well as softness of expression, the young girl's mind, unsettled, it might be, by the vigil she was keeping, became as thoroughly impressed as ever her uncle's could have been with the reality of a spiritual manifestation.

“To me, father!—speak to me!” she said, anxiously; expecting each moment to see the vision melt away. “He is your son; your only son: but am I not also your child? At present, Richard cannot hear or heed. I will obey you implicitly.”

Jacob Mohr turned slowly towards her as she addressed him. He laid down Richard's

hand, which he had taken in his own, and said calmly, in a strong foreign accent,—

“Der Herr Lieutenant will wake presently. He is better — ganz recht; almost well. Have no fear, meine Fraulein! He will not need your good care or mine much longer.”

Mary looked at him, as he spoke, with bewilderment. The voice, the manner, were evidently not what she expected; yet there was something in the features which still kept up the illusion. While she was gazing at the stranger with troubled wonder, Richard opened his eyes, clear and free from fever, and looked up at him with perfect recognition.

“Herr Mohr,” he said, “you are the man who saved my life by bleeding me. I give you my thanks. Add to the favour by telling me when I may get up and leave this house.”

“Now — immediately — this very moment!” answered the foreigner. “I, with my boat’s crew, am come to fetch you.”

Richard passed his hand over his brow. A crowd of recollections was thronging upon him so fast, that he could not arrange them in order.

The smuggler’s countenance did not wake up in his mind the same image it had raised in Mary’s more excited fancy. His brain

was still weak; one idea at a time was as much as his returning senses could deal with. He had not seen his sister, who still sat trembling, half hidden by the curtain. His mind was full of the communications made to him by Mr. Lawrence, just before he fell into the deep lethargy in which he had been plunged for hours.

“Tell me,” he said, somewhat feebly, “are you, indeed, the famous smuggler, Jacob Mohr? I have heard you spoken of by another name, which is connected with this house. Were you not once known as Gervase Helier, Captain of the Nautilus? and did you not, eighteen years ago, run a cargo on the beach, below these dark woods?”

“Why do you wish to know?” said Mohr. “Ach, mein freund! it is seldom a man—one citizen of the world, like myself—goes to his grave with the same name he had when he was christened. I am Jacob Mohr, the Dutch skipper; and you—well, you have had more names than one, though you have not lived so long as I have. Shall I call you Herr Osborne, or St. Erme?”

“St. Erme!” said the young man, colouring. “That is my name. It was my father’s before me. It was not by my own wish that for a time I laid it down. It has

been marked by misfortune ; but I will never again be known by any other."

"Right!" said Mohr. "It is a bad thing to part with one's name. Now, let me tell you one thing. I have heard your name of St. Erme before. It has to me a pleasant sound. Ah! it rings true, like the red gold! I do not believe any crime has sullied its brightness ;—it is a good name, I tell you ;—one day you will be proud to bear it. It is better to be known by such a name than to be numbered 12—20—340—which was it?—as your father was. Ah, that was a bitter fall, and he had a proud spirit! No wonder he broke loose. And I, Herr Lieutenant—yes, I, Jacob Mohr—Gervase Helier—No. 339—what matters it?—well, I helped him when he shook off his fetters."

"Speak more plainly, I entreat," exclaimed Richard St. Erme, impatiently. "You helped my father to escape from that degrading captivity?—You knew him when he was in exile?"

"Yes! we were friends—very good friends," said the Dutchman, while, in spite of his assumed calmness, deep inward feeling manifested itself in the altered tones of his voice, and Mary eagerly bent forward to listen.

"Ah, my children! you will never hear

more of your father than I can tell you. Those who have suffered as he did cannot come back to their families. I am a smuggler—I call myself what I please. I run my vessel into port, and provided I make out my papers to satisfy your Excise—Customs—what name you it?—that is enough—no one cares to inquire where I have passed my time: but with your father it was quite different. He was a high-born English gentleman, and very proud—too proud, he said so often himself. He could not wear a felon's dress and share a felon's cell, and be put to menial occupations, and feel the same as he did in England. No, not though he was innocent of the crime for which he was sent beyond seas. It was then—so he said to me one day—that he died;—to all intents and purposes, he perished. But he gave me a charge, and it is on my conscience that it is not yet acquitted. Though he were dead, his memory, he said, would survive him, and be a torment or a blessing to his children. Well, he bade me say, if I ever got back to England, that he did not kill Herr Fleming. They had words on the cliff, and parted in anger, but your father only lifted his hand in self-defence, to take from the drunken man the weapon with which he threatened him. And now the time is passing—I can tell you no more in this

house. Will you trust yourself with me, Herr Richard? I can speak plainer when I am on board my vessel. One way or other, we may arrive at the knowledge of facts which never saw daylight at Colonel St. Erme's trial."

The young sailor raised himself on his pillow. As he did so, his eyes fell for the first time on Mary. "Am I dreaming?" he said. "Is that my sister, or one of the many visions which have hovered near me? Come hither, Mary! let me feel and see that you are alive."

The young girl stepped close up to the bed, on the other side from that where Mohr was standing, partly in shadow. Her hand rested in her brother's warm clasp, but her eyes met those of the smuggler.

"Ah!" she said passionately, "answer me one question. You have said too much and too little. Is my father really dead? I cannot, as I look upon you, believe it."

"And yet it is true," said Mohr, compassionately. "Ah, you are young, Fraulein, and death to the very young scarcely seems real. You think that in a little while all will be well. But there are partings which are for ever in this life, and it was such a farewell that your father breathed over your pillow,—he has told me of it often. For such a sepa-

ration there is on this side the grave no end. It is best so. Those tender ties once snapped cannot, by the most cunning hand, be re-knit. You loved your father. He was, in your infancy, very dear to you—a bright, fearless man, with no stain on his brow. When you were a little child you laughed, and were glad to see him coming. Even so!—keep his memory with you as he was then. Spare no pains and cost to clear his reputation. I have gold in my locker on board *La Belle Marie*, which will help you, and it shall be spent freely; but never in this world expect to look upon his face again. You weep! well, be it so; he was not quite unworthy of your tears; but had he lived—had he, like me, returned to England—*Ja wohl!*—that would have been a bad day for him and you. If he did not commit the great crime of which he was accused, he incurred a punishment which for ever blasts the existence of him on whom, justly or unjustly, it alights. That sentence at once divided him from his children. After living among criminals—branded like them—how could he, guilty or innocent, take his place among honest men? *Mein Kind!* it is vain to struggle against Destiny. All your hot tears will not wipe out that terrible stain.”

“*Herr Mohr*, we are none of us stainless,”
Mary said, laying her hand upon the open Bible.

“There is not one of us—not the youngest child—who is able truly to call himself without sin. But there are waters pure enough to wash away from our souls these evil marks. Deep as the dye may be, the fleece shall be made white as snow, if the Shepherd will but bring the wanderer from the flock—the one lost by the way—to the Fountain. Of such crime as man would impute, I know that my father was not guilty. I do not believe that he is dead. Through you his voice speaks to my heart. You have caught in your long companionship tones and expressions familiar to me in childhood. By those memories, I adjure you, give back to me my father!”

Richard started up as Mary, with a wild cry, threw herself into Mohr's arms, and clung to him, hiding her face on his shoulder. The smuggler's strong frame shook with emotion.

“Ruhig, mein Kind!—ruhig! Ah, this poor thing has been too severely tried,” he said, supporting her half-fainting form. “She is wild with sorrow. See!” Mohr observed, as he placed her tenderly in a seat, “her senses are returning; she will be well presently. But what must we do? We cannot leave her here.”

Mary took her hands from her face, and

looked at him steadily. "Tell me," she said firmly, "your errand here. Was it to see me and Richard? Did your spiritual instinct tell you that we were in this chamber?"

"No! Himmel und Erde! that I did not expect," exclaimed the smuggler, with strong discomposure. "Richard, I have seen before—he owes his life to me; but you—gnädige Fraulein!—heilige Madonna!—yours is a countenance which I did not anticipate looking upon to-night at Woods. My errand was to take Richard away. I do not like to leave him in this house. He cannot quit it too soon."

"Be it so," said Mary. "I accept the responsibility. Only, you must take us both away. At present, my brother requires my care. From you I shall hear all that is to be told by mortal lips of my father. I would go to the end of the world to learn the truth—why not upon the waters with you and Richard?"

Jacob Mohr looked at her with surprise. "Ah!" he said, drawing a deep breath, "you will go with us? You, a delicate young lady, will go with the rough smuggler on board his vessel, La Belle Marie? Come, then, and fear not. You shall be as safe, aye, safer than in Lezant Parsonage. But we must be quick. This man, Jean Helier, is gone, perhaps, to

inform against us, and there is no time to lose.”

He went to the private door and whistled. The men who were waiting below knew the signal. In a few moments, Richard was carried by rough hands, but cautiously, to the litter brought for him. Mohr drew the young girl's arm within his own, and conducted her through the dense thickets of the ravine to the boat which lay upon the strand, within an easy row of the spot where, under the great headland of Tintagel, La Belle Marie swung loosely at her anchor in the misty moonless night.

CHAPTER X.

THE old house among the woods looked more desolate than ever to Lance Fleming, when he approached it, on the evening of Miss St. Erme's visit, just as the last tremulous ray of stormy sunshine faded from its walls. He had not set foot within his mother's dwelling since, at Mohr's request, he had abstained from taking part in his discussion with Helier respecting the disposal of the smuggled goods, and the safest mode of dealing with the shipwrecked officer; but their hesitation to proceed with the subject in his presence, and evident anxiety to be freed from his observation, still dwelt in his thoughts, and mingled with the recollection of the steward's insinuations, and the floating reports current in Lezant town.

Lance did not go in, as usual, by the side-door nearest to his own room, but walked round to the front entrance, narrowly investigating the premises. Their complete disrepair had never before struck so forcibly upon

his attention. Many a stormy night in winter, when the wind rattled off the slates, and the rain poured into the upper chambers, he had entered carelessly; had heard the decaying floors crack beneath his tread, and slept soundly; though more than one of the small panes of the casement-windows in his bed-room were broken, and ill-replaced by Leah's awkward contrivances. Now, however, not one mark of ruin and neglect escaped his notice. Lord Boscawen's deputy had not cast such vigilant glances over his master's property, as the hitherto regardless youth who had grown up under the ill-omened shadow of those tottering walls.

He remembered every keen word and crafty suggestion thrown out by the agent. Since he was a child, Lance had detested the Grange; but he had never till now dwelt upon the strong evidences of misrule, as particularly affecting himself. Now, he read the history of the past years by another light. Words and letters started out from the mouldering stones, and were written on the shattered cornices of door and window. Why did Lord Boscawen and his agent tolerate and even commend so unworthy a tenant? Was there not some secret reason for their upholding of John Helier in his occupancy, as well as for the steward's recent tampering

with himself? He resolved that the night should not pass without settling the question now working in his mind.

It was nearly dark within the house. Lance heard a faint sigh, as he passed the door of the common sitting-room. He stood still, then turned back, and entered.

In the most shadowy corner, Mrs. Helier was sitting, rocking herself slowly in her accustomed chair, on the bare unpolished oak floor. She did not speak when her son came in. He was not usually attentive or dutiful to her; but, on this occasion, his manner was softened. Lance went close up to his mother, and tried to take her hand; but the poor frightened creature, totally unaccustomed to tenderness, misunderstood his intention, and shrank away. Her son, easily repulsed, did not persist in his endeavour, but sat down at a short distance from her. For some moments, both were silent.

As he watched the dim form near him, frail and shadowy, slightly moving, as if perfect repose of mind or body was unattainable, a dark, ill-defined horror crept over the young man's excited fancy. He could not recollect one childish ebullition of tenderness having ever welled forth towards that sad, brain-sick mother; nor, on her part, one affectionate caress. What were, what could

be, the dark events which had raised such a bar between them? How had the maternal feelings she must once have cherished for her first-born child been frozen? Through what rivers of bitter waters had she been dragged, before the holiest, and, at the same time, the simplest impulses of her woman's heart, had been thus utterly crushed? When he heard the low moaning sound which now and then passed her lips, as she gradually became forgetful of his presence, deep compassion took possession of his soul. The half-formed, unfavourable impressions died away; and he said eagerly, bending towards her in the dull, dusk room,—

“Mother! what is it makes you always so miserable? I am a man, now; able to protect and advise you. I wish I had always been more of a help to you. There is surely some dreadful secret weighing upon your mind. Is it that man, Helier, whom you fear so much? Has he laid this terrible weight upon you? I want to know more than I have hitherto done of his past life. If you speak freely, I will shield you from the consequences of his fury.”

Mrs. Helier covered farther into the darkness. She did not utter a syllable. Lance waited a moment, and then went on,—

“You have often asked me not to take

part with the smugglers, mother. Would it please you to know that I mean to break off entirely my connexion with them? I do not remember that you ever made me any other request," he added, with some bitterness, searching his mind in vain for any token of past interest or solicitude which the silent woman before him had ever evinced. "Does it gratify you, mother, to hear that Jacob Mohr, the Dutch smuggling captain, and I are no longer friends?"

"Yes!" said Mrs. Helier, faintly. Her voice died away in inarticulate efforts, as she tried vainly to say more. Lance listened, but, beyond the low affirmative, he could make out nothing.

"Did you know anything of this man, mother?" he asked presently. "Has he ever, to your knowledge, been in England, or at Woods, before? I fancy that you may have seen him formerly?"

"I! what makes you think so?" replied Mrs. Helier, roused from her apathy at last. Lance's quick eyes saw that she had lifted herself up; and with both hands resting on the arms of her chair, she leaned forward, trying to look at him. "What should I know about these foreign smugglers? I, who have always hated them?"

"Well! I suppose there is a reason for

hate as well as love, though both are senseless enough sometimes," said Lance, in a lighter tone. "What made you dislike smuggling so much? You must have seen plenty of it on the Sussex coast, where you were born. Was it there, or afterwards, that you learned to hate the free-traders?"

"Why do you torment me, Lance?" groaned Mrs. Helier. "It was a different thing, then, from what it is now. There were never such dreadful tales told there, as have made my blood run cold in these damp woods. Down to Emsworth, or Havant, one heard now and then of a run; I did not mind it as I do now. After all, what was it?—a pair of French gloves and a bottle of sweet water—nothing worse!—it went no further. Why do you bring up such nonsense?"

"Mother! it is of more consequence than you think," said Lance, drawing his chair nearer to her; while Mrs. Helier pushed her seat suddenly back, making a sharp, shrieking sound on the floor, as it grated over the boards. "These French or Sussex smugglers (they traded with one another), I have heard that a crew of them once landed here, or not far off along the coast, from a brig called the Nautilus. Did you ever hear of it before?"

Not a sound proceeded from the dark corner, into which Mrs. Helier had crept back. Lance went on firmly.

“ I am sorry to grieve you, but what is in my heart must be spoken out. Mother! on that night when the Nautilus landed her cargo, a fearful crime was committed—my father met his death. Tell me your recollections of that awful time. Did the Captain of the Nautilus resemble Mohr? What were the circumstances under which you saw him?”

The unhappy woman writhed in her chair as he questioned her.

“ How should I know what the man was like? I hardly saw him; and the smuggling Captain Mohr—well, I scarce looked in his face. Leave off questioning me, Lance! How dare you mention that night to me? No one has done so since the trial.”

“ Perhaps not,” said Lance. “ People thought the matter settled; but a new light has broken in upon me, and I cannot rest till it brightens or darkens in my mind, and the sight of all men, into conviction. Is it not more likely that these murderous villains, whom you hate, took my father’s life, to prevent his giving the alarm, than that a gentleman, like Colonel St. Erme, shot him in the darkness? Mother! you will not let

the innocent bear the load of punishment longer? You know, as well as I do, that Colonel St. Erme was not guilty. Where is his son, that I may tell him so?"

Mrs. Helier became suddenly still as he spoke. She ceased to heave herself to and fro, and her voice was softer as she answered him,—

"He is here. No harm shall happen to him; not, at least, if I can help it. Oh, Lance, it is hard upon him! He is quite the gentleman, like his father. I never said or thought that Colonel St. Erme lifted his hand against my poor husband. He was as kind and good as possible. But that is all past now, and I know nothing about the circumstances you speak of. Surely, it were best to let the matter drop."

"Impossible!" said Lance, sternly. "I must and will have an answer to my question. Did Gervase Helier, on that night, come to Woods? Had he speech with my father?"

"Yes, yes! there was talk enough — there always is when men drink and quarrel," said Mrs. Helier, wearily. "Gervase came to make inquiries about Lord Boscawen. Fleming was angry when he heard his business, and refused to give him any assistance in searching for the papers of the French lady who once lived here, and had a child

that was buried, folks say, in the little walled-up niche half-way up the great staircase. Gervase called himself her son and my Lord's, born in wedlock. Fleming did not believe the story. He declared that, if there were any flaw in his Lordship's marriage articles, he himself and his children would be the gainers by it, since they would come so much the nearer to the heirship of the title and estates. He always set great store by the connexion, and used to talk about it to me before we were married; but after we came to live here, I saw it was all folly. I heard him swear fearfully that night, while I stood at the top of the stairs, with you in my arms. It was an insult to his Lordship, he said, for these low, foreign people, to come about the place, talking of their claims. He went out of the house with the men, saying he should see them off the premises, and daring them to venture here again. Jean Helier, my present husband, had anger from his master for admitting them. They all went away together."

"And you never saw my father again alive?" said Lance. "Gervase Helier stated himself, in his presence, to be Lord Boscawen's son—the child of the French lady whose hoods and farthingales hang in the ghost-chamber. This may account for Mohr's

wish to sleep in a room that is shunned by everybody! I do not believe, any more than my father, that Gervase Helier was what he pretended to be, nor that any of that lady's children are living. But, mother, admit that the tale were partly true—that Lord Boscawen, in his wild youth, married this Frenchwoman—in that case, any subsequent alliance of his, formed during her lifetime, would be invalid, and his children, by the so-called Lady Boscawen, illegitimate. I am certain of there being some hitch or flaw, which that old steward knows of, and is anxious to conceal. Admit, I say, there *was* a marriage; then, unquestionably, I stand in my father's stead, and am now the rightful heir to the title and estates, provided there is no son by the French lady living."

"You!" said Mrs. Helier, scornfully. "Lance, this is worse folly than your father's. Perhaps such idle fancies brought him to his grave. Since he met with his terrible death, Lord Boscawen has never done anything to advance you in life, or show that he regards you as related to him. You do not know what a difference there is between the rough, illiterate company you keep, and that of lords and gentlemen. Look at the poor sick youth up-stairs. Except where the sea-wind has tanned it, his skin is white as snow. His

hand, as it rests on the coverlet, is like a lady's, soft and delicate, with long, tapering fingers and filbert-shaped nails. You would never be a fit companion for him."

Lance turned from her, bitterly mortified. "All you say, mother, cannot alter the fact, that I have gentle blood in my veins, and, thank God, have done nothing seriously to disgrace it. Now, I must make what atonement I can to Colonel St. Erme through his son. He is not safe in this house. I believe he would be still less so on board Jacob Mohr's vessel, where, as I have heard from the sailors, there is a plan for taking him, to prevent his giving notice, when his senses return, that the schooner is off the coast. Is he able to understand his danger?"

"He is asleep," answered Mrs. Helier. "He lies like one dead, under the influence of a strong medicine given him by Doctor Lawrence. I nursed him one night; now I am not wanted. His sister is come to take care of him. The young lady will be angry, perhaps, if you intrude yourself upon her."

"Not so," said Lance. "Miss St. Erme has a kind word and smile for the roughest fisherman on Lezant Quay. Besides, if she has her brother's safety at heart, she must listen to me."

He walked, thoughtfully, up the dark oak stairs, and saw light shining under the door of the small room over the porch. The next moment it opened softly, and the young French girl, in a low, sweet tone, invited him to enter.

The curtains were drawn across the window, and Reine's little foreign lamp burned clear and bright. The table was strewn with manuscript papers, some freshly written, others old and faded, on thin, yellowish, discoloured leaves.

“ See, Monsieur Fleming, my task is ended !” said Reine, as she put the papers together. “ It has cost me some tears. You will now be able to read all that poor foreign lady suffered in this grim old mansion. Ah, I would not willingly bear it ! — And she was French, like me. She loved to sing her gay songs at first, till sorrow made her sad and silent. I have done it into English for you as well as I could ; you can read it for yourself, now. Ah, Monsieur !” she said, blushing, “ let it teach you one lesson. Do not love lightly — above all, do not marry and forget, and disown the woman who loves you, as that poor thing loved her husband, and would be true to you till death !”

Lance looked earnestly at the carefully

arranged papers, dated and labelled, in the French girl's neat handwriting. "You think, Mademoiselle Reine, that these letters are from a wife to her husband?" he said, as he received the packet. "Well, you are, perhaps, right. At all events, your good opinion, your pure, instinctive knowledge of what is true and virtuous in woman, shall dwell in my thoughts when I peruse this poor, ill-used lady's letters. Ten thousand thanks for the trouble you have taken."

Reine raised her eyes, which were full of tears, to his face. "You do not understand our language, Monsieur," she remarked. "These pages will not speak to your heart as they have done to mine. They are not so touching in English, though I have tried to preserve the idiom. Your active, daring life, by sea and land, has not left you time for such heart-wearying sorrow as women experience, when they are left alone in such a house as this. But, in all that I have seen in these papers, there is no remorse, no self-reproach, such as would have come upon that poor thing in solitude, if she had committed a wrong action. They are not exactly letters, though she addresses one absent. I think he was very cruel, and that her lot was a harder one than she then thought, for the man to whom such pathetic appeals are addressed

seems seldom to have come near her. None of his friends visit her; she is as much alone as if already in the tomb. Even when her babies are born, and when one dies, and is carried away from her at night to be buried, that hard-hearted man takes no notice. Then her patience, plainly, was exhausted. She writes to her brother, in answer to a letter full of harsh accusations, and tells him that she has not brought shame upon their ancient house, and she encloses proofs of her marriage, and admits there is danger, in case of her death, that it may be disavowed. This letter was never sent — you will find it with other documents which I have not attempted to translate. Leah has often told me how that poor lady fled for her life when the fire was raging; and these papers must, in her great terror and haste, have been left behind. I wonder what became of her and her baby. The name of her family, St. Evremond, I have heard before. Their castle hangs, in ruins now, upon the high crags that overlook the Rance; but none of that old race are left alive.

“We are both young,” the girl added, passionately, while Lance, even by his silence, showed how much he was interested, — “we have not yet suffered like that unhappy one; but I am afraid trials are coming upon us. The air of this house is oppressive. I feel as

if there was death in the atmosphere. Each time I hear the closing of a distant door, I fancy a corpse may be borne through. Is the poor seaman — the mate of La Belle Marie, who lies ill in the ghost-chamber — still living? If Jacob Mohr had permitted it, I would have nursed him; but he sent me away — he would not hear of it; and yet Mademoiselle St. Erme has found her way to him. I could not gainsay her wish, when I came suddenly upon her at the door, and she told me that her uncle, the venerable white-haired Pastor of Lezant, had sent her to pray by the poor dying sailor.”

Lance gazed at her with surprise and compassion. “Mademoiselle Reine,” he said, “you are deceived. That poor fellow, whose groans disturbed you a few nights since, is not at Woods. The sick man who occupies that dreaded chamber is one much dearer to you — the young naval Lieutenant, son of the banished man, Colonel St. Erme. It is Helier’s interest and Mohr’s to hide the truth; to say that, when his vessel foundered at sea, her Commander perished. I do not trust Jacob Mohr as implicitly as formerly; and I believe there is a dark design on foot. It is my duty, at all hazards, to rouse that slumberer. Will you not share with me the

task of saving him from being carried to-night on board *La Belle Marie*?"

The bright, warm colour which flushed over Reine's clear brow, receded: for a moment she was deadly pale. The idea that her lover lay in such sickness and sorrow under that roof, and that she had been excluded from his chamber, made her heart bound with indignation against Mohr.

"Let us go!" she said, taking up the lamp with a trembling hand. "Even now we may be too late. I will never trust any one again."

Lance followed her, as she went swiftly along the passages, guarding the flickering flame with her hand, when the draughts of cold air met them at the corners. Reine's step grew firmer, and she carried the lamp more steadily as she advanced; while Lance, on the contrary, felt some of his old shyness and awkwardness oppress him, as he drew nearer to the apartment where Mary St. Erme, he believed, was keeping watch and ward over her sick brother.

CHAPTER XI.

THE silent, deserted aspect of the empty chamber, had a startling effect upon Lance and Reine when they entered it, with hearts beating high with indignant expectation. The only signs of recent occupancy were the couch coverings, disordered and thrown back, and the lamp left burning on the table. Bouffe, who had run in unnoticed, went eagerly round, snuffing at the dark wainscoting, and more especially directing his attention to the masked door, through which, not many minutes earlier, Mary and Richard had followed the smuggler.

“Holla, Bouffe! good dog!” said Lance, suddenly perceiving the spaniel’s earnest endeavour to pursue the trace he had found. “Art on the track of thy old master? Was that the way he left this chamber?”

Bouffe stood back as the young man approached, but still whined low, and stood

with his long ears and tail vibrating with eagerness to pass the apparently impervious barrier before him.

“In time, you will be mistress of all the secrets of this old house, Mademoiselle,” said Lance, pressing back the spring; while Reine impatiently drew near. “You have told me a strange tale to-night; and here before you — this dark, gloomy recess — is the French lady’s dressing-closet. ’Twas here Mabb and I found the journal you have translated for me; and, if you look at Bouffe, you will see it is through this passage that Jacob Mohr, his former master, has carried off young St. Erme and his sister. They cannot have preceded us by many minutes. The scent is not cold.”

Bouffe was careering along with his nose to the ground, down the long, dark passage, and already beyond their sight. Lance hesitated for a moment.

“Adieu, Mademoiselle Reine!” he said. “That is almost the first French word you taught me. I have been to you a sorry pupil; and now I must leave you in this cold, damp place alone. It is the only chance of preventing the villainy which, I fear, will be attempted. I may catch Jacob Mohr before he sets foot on the deck of La Belle Marie. Perhaps I shall make him listen to reason.”

“ Let me go on, if only for a short distance! They may not be so far off as you fancy,” said the French girl, struggling with unusual emotion. “ Monsieur Lance, I implore you to take me to the outer air with you! I will walk quick. I will be no hindrance.”

“ Come, then!” said Lance, kindly, seeing how much she was moved; “ but these passages are chill as the grave, and you are thinly dressed. Are you afraid to wear Madame’s laced hood and cloak?” he asked; pulling down, from the pegs on which they hung, the old-fashioned wraps, once belonging to the foreigner, and enveloping the young girl in their folds. “ Now, you may follow me.”

Reine offered no resistance; though the cold feeling at her heart became yet more painful, as she felt herself covered by the poor dead lady’s mantle. Lance said no more; and, lightfooted as she was, she did not find it easy to keep pace with him.

When they emerged from the gloom of the building, no person was visible in the courtyard, nor on the path beyond, leading towards the thicket.

“ Now, Mademoiselle, we must part!” said Lance. “ It is impossible for me to take you through the brushwood. Not a moment must be lost. Jacob Mohr will not let the grass spring under his footsteps.”

He kissed her hand with more gallantry than might have been expected from him. Reine stood leaning breathlessly against the low, lichen-covered wall, as she tried to follow him with her gaze.

Staggering, stammering, horrified beyond belief, Helier, the cowardly master of the Grange, was arrested, on his way from the stables, by the sight of the strange hooded figure of a female, hanging mute over the ruined stonework. He stared wildly at her.

“Bonté de Dieu! Miséricorde!” he exclaimed, dropping the lantern he carried, while Reine turned round in surprise. “Mon Dieu! there is death in that stony creature’s gaze!”

He threw up his arms, and with a shrill scream for help which echoed through the ruins, fell prostrate on the pavement. Reine, who did not understand his cause for terror, since she had quite forgotten the strange draperies Lance had wound round her, hastened towards him, just as Leah, attracted by his cries, entered the courtyard from the house.

Though her nerves were stronger than Helier’s, yet, when her eyes fell on the shrouded form bending over her master, the housekeeper quailed with terror.

“Truly, our sins always find us out!” she said, under her breath, stopping short.

“What evil thing is that, yonder? Speak, woman! — witch — demon — what are you about?”

“Oh, Leah, c'est moi — Reine!” said the girl, shaking off the white hood, and revealing her pale, frightened features. “See! — look! here is my poor cousin. Something has terrified him, I fear, to death. Help me to take him in-doors.”

Leah came nearer, and looked down at Helier's dark face, up-turned in the flickering light of the lantern which lay upon the ground.

“'Tis nothing,” she said, contemptuously. “Perhaps he has been drinking! And 'twas enough to scare him. Why, girl! what tog-gery hast got on? Have you and Lance been masquerading? It is not the first time he has played the ghost, but I never suspected you of helping him. I'll be bound Helier took you for the French lady. He has been at some bad trick, you may be sure, and has at all times more than you or I would like to bear upon his conscience. Anyhow, he must not lie there all night. Wait by him for a minute, while I call one of the men to carry him to his bed. But stop! take off that white shroud, or there's not a fellow on the premises will come within a hundred yards of you.”

Reine obeyed her silently, and in a few minutes Leah returned, bringing with her a stout labourer, whom she had roused from his sleep in the outbuildings. With the housekeeper's assistance, the man bore the master of the Grange, who was slowly recovering his senses, to his own chamber.

CHAPTER XII.

IN the inner room at the Three Crowns, the old man, Simon Brock, was bending over the table on which lay his closed Bible, tracts, and hymn-books. His infirmity seemed to have increased during the last few weeks; even his pipe was laid aside, and he gazed into the fire with a dull, dissatisfied air. At intervals, he appeared to listen to the loud conversation in the outer room; but, in general, it did not attract his attention. The time was past when he had cared for smuggling exploits; those of which the men boasted were of recent date, and no longer concerned the old publican.

“Is there news yet of the French Mary?” said one of the sailors who were drinking the brown ale Andrew had fetched from the copious cellar. “Has any one heard what sort of a cruise the skipper made of it? She must have have had foul weather in the Channel.”

“Aye, aye, she’s all right,” answered a

seaman opposite to him. "La Belle Marie sits like a duck on the water, and would scarce wet her wings: she likes to have wind enough to fill her course. Have you heard," he added, lowering his tone, "that young St. Erme—he was called Osborne when he had the cutter—went to sea with Mynheer?"

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Brock, sharply. "His Reverence stopped at our door, this morning, and as good as told me to contradict that report, if any one mentioned it in our tap-room. He's a high man, is Mr. St. Erme; but no one can doubt that he's a gentleman, and the real gentry ought to be respected. He said, 'Dame Brock, you'll be glad to hear that the young officer reported to be lost in the Curlew, off Tintagel, escaped drowning. He was washed ashore further down the coast, and is slowly recovering from his immersion.' That was the Rector's word—he's fond of a long one, in and out of his sermons; and I give it you as it fell from his lips. He spoke it just like a book—as if he'd learnt his part, like the actors at Helston, and wanted to say it. I never saw his Reverence so neighbourly and condescending."

"Be sure he had his reasons for it, and for ordering the eighteen-gallon cask of yale to be sent up as it used to be!" said An-

drew, setting down another jug. "There's a cause for most things, be they never so uncommon; and why wouldn't there be for our Passon walking from one end to the other of Lezant town? He has not done as much visiting this twelvemonth; and I'll be bound he said the same words, long or short, in every house in the parish. It's not often he lets himself down to talk about family matters; but when other folks would shut their mouths and keep at home, he takes to gossiping. I say, mother, did he tell you what you were to say about the young lady? I should like to know, since I am to be so mortal particular about pleasing him. Is it true that she took a passage to France with the Dutch skipper?"

The old man, at the end of the room, put back the curtain, and listened eagerly for the answer, which Mrs. Brock did not utter quite so glibly as usual.

"Miss Mary? Well, yes; he did say something about her. How often am I to tell you to let your betters alone, especially when they happen to be customers? Miss Mary's away, just now, visiting some relations, and finds the change of air beneficial. I'm sure we're all glad to hear it. The poor thing looks as if she wanted rousing, sadly."

Andrew laughed sneeringly; but none of

the men at the table echoed the sound. They drank their liquor silently.

“What business is it of yours,” said his mother, angrily, “where his Reverence’s family may be stopping? You’re just such another fool as Morgan Price, who took the exciseman and the tax-collector to Woods, and swore he had notice that Lieutenant Osborne—(it’s not the Rector’s pleasure that he should be called St. Erme, though we may have our own thoughts for that matter)—Well, the landlord of the Boscawen told a tale that few were silly enough to believe about the Lieutenant lying sick at Woods. And what did he find when he got there, but the old house just as usual, and not a creature but Mr. Helier’s family inside its walls? I’ll answer for it, the Boscawen gets none of *their* custom! He’s a meddling, troublesome fellow, and runs his pate against every stone wall in the country. If he gets it smashed some time, I won’t say we mightn’t lose a wiser one; and you’re just his fellow. Can’t you hold your tongue?”

“No, I like talking better,” said Andrew; “and those who keep a change-house and entertain company should not sit mute. It helps to pass the liquor when there’s pleasant conversation going. I don’t believe a word of the old gentleman’s story, neither does he.

He would not have taken the trouble to walk up street, if 'twas only truth he'd got to tell. He'd keep that for Sundays. I tell you, the Lieutenant *was* sick at the Grange. For that matter, I was one of the chaps that helped to carry him up there."

The men at the board listened with more attention than usual to his idle talk.

"Yes, yes! you're sharp enough," Mrs. Brock answered, contemptuously. "It's a pity you sometimes see double. Who can trust what Andrew says? If it was only for Morgan Price telling it, I'd not believe the story. I never heard such rubbish. Don't let your father hear it! We'll never have the last word, if you do."

The old man, though he had heard most of what was said, did not seem inclined to interfere. He turned away from the noisy group, and sat looking drearily into the fire.

"He's vexed at heart to lose his young lady," continued Dame Brock, with a compassionate glance at her husband; "and I don't think he's so well as usual. Fetch his pipe for him, lad, and light it. I don't like to see him give it up, when he's nothing else to comfort him."

Andrew did not stir; but one of the men went goodhumouredly to the other end of the room, and talked kindly for a few minutes to

the old landlord, lighting his pipe for him, and trying to cheer him; but all seemed unavailing.

“There’s something come over him since the Camelford Doctor was here last time,” said Dame Brock. “It’s against Simon’s nature to talk much, and it never agreed with him: but Mr. Lawrence is such a gossip, and asks such questions, he’d draw secrets out of a stone. It’s not the kind of thing I like, and the less often it happens the better I shall be pleased. He’s done the old man no good; calling up all sorts of fancies, and talking to him about the bad accident he met with. That always upsets him. I wonder such a clever doctor didn’t know better than to vex him with putting him in mind of the night that made him, from a fine man as he was, little better than an infant. I call it downright cruelty!”

Andrew looked at her uneasily.

“The Doctor’s an uncommon hand at sharp questions,” he said. “I never heard a man ask so many as he did when I took the King’s shilling, and ’listed for foreign parts. I say, mother, did you hear all he and the old man said to each other? I was busy with the tubs.”

“Mind your own business!” said Dame Brock; “and let your father and me attend

to ours. There's more sense in his poor brain, now, than yours, and no harm ever. I am only sorry his talk with the Doctor hurt him. What can it matter else what they said about things that fell out nigh upon twenty years ago?"

Andrew took a long draught at the foaming tankard, as if he needed invigorating after his mother's severity; and then passed the measure round.

"Helier of the Grange has got favour shown him! He's to have his lease signed at last, and holds on easier terms than ever," said the farmer from the moor, north of Camelford, at whose house the mate of the schooner had lain hidden. "That's a hard thing for those who have done their duty by the land, and sunk money in it, to see a fellow that's not worth a farthing, and grows no crops, put above them! It scarce seems just."

"He's got the measure of old Hearnshaw's foot. The steward rules my Lord, and he's taken a fancy to black-muzzled John. There's no accounting for likings!" remarked another of the small farmers of the district, men little removed from peasants, who drank their measure nightly at the Three Crowns.

"Whether he's a tenant-at-will or not, he'll not bide long at the Grange. The place is more awesome than ever. Why, the very

night he came back from Camelford, the day the Court was held there, as he went in at his own back-door, he saw a ghost in the yard! A woman all over blood, carrying her head under her arm! He's not got over it yet. He fell down in a fit; and when the house-keeper came up, she saw a figure standing over him. It vanished immediately; but I can tell you, stouthearted woman as she is — I've seen her walk backwards across a long field, face to face with a bull — Leah Scriven was daunted. As for John Helier, he's not been off his bed since; and some say he'll never leave it."

The bully, Andrew Brock, listened with a white face to this exaggerated story.

"I say, mother, I'll be hanged if I ever do another errand for you, or Lance Fleming either, at the Grange. I'll not forget what I saw and heard, when we got Harry Mabb off in a hurry. They groped about together, did Helier and the steward; behind the wainscot, and under the old flooring; but whether in search of dead men's bones, or a pot of gold, is more than I can tell ye; though I heard some of their talk. Hearnshaw wouldn't see anything that day that didn't please him at Woods. No, not the rotting fences, nor the choked-up drains, nor the charlock and thistles, nor the slates

tumbled off the building, and lying all about, while the rain had streamed in through the holes in the roof, and spoiled all the papers in the best bed-rooms. He's sharp enough, sometimes: but it didn't suit him then to find a fault. If Jean Helier had been the jolliest fellow in England, they could not have got on better."

"Well, hang me, if I liked to have a hand in this last venture, when Harry Mabb told me half the cargo was to be consigned to Helier of Woods," said the farmer from the moor, sullenly. "If Hearnshaw likes him, I can't say I do—a cowardly, shuffling, down-faced blackguard! There's not a bit of pluck in him. He looks as if he had committed some foul deed, and was afraid even his own shadow following him might find it out."

At that moment, the wheels of a gig rattled sharp and quick over the stones. Andrew went out to see if it brought custom to the house.

A man, muffled in a great coat and wrapper, and driven by a servant, passed by without stopping; but the horse was pulled up short just beyond the door, and the groom, springing out, called for a bucket of water for the animal, and a tumbler of hot brandy-and-water for his master. They were quickly

provided with both requisites, and, having paid for them, the travellers went on their way.

“I’d bet a pound to a crown that was old Hearnshaw ; but, hang me, if I could see his face, and the chap that drove him was a stranger,” said Andrew, coming back from the door, looking sorely puzzled. “Where can he be going at this time of night?”

“There has been a great dinner at Stratton ; my Lord’s grandson is just of age in foreign parts,” said the miller from Trevena, who was a tenant on the Boscawen estate. “I stopped an hour myself, and left old Hearnshaw making speeches. It’s just the age when so many of the family have gone off, and there’s great rejoicing to think that this young gentleman has got over it. There were orders from abroad that the day should be kept ; but, though there was enough to eat and drink, things went off badly. The speeches were flattish. I was glad to get away early.”

“There’s not much gaiety in such things now,” said Dame Brock. “They were a deal pleasanter when I was young. Folks were of twenty minds, I heard, whether there should be any rejoicings ; and as for illuminating the town, which was talked about, ’t was said there was bad news come from abroad,

and that, after all, the young gentleman's birthday might not be kept."

"Well, the feast was not put off," answered the miller; "and, if any bad news came, Hearnshaw put the letter in his pocket, and said nothing about it. There was not much liveliness, though, after he dropped a hint that, at the present price of corn in the market, the land hereabouts ought to produce a better rental. It was buzzed about the room pretty quick, I can tell ye; indeed, for that matter, he said the words to a person who was safe to repeat them after him. No wonder people seemed down in the mouth."

"There never was such ungrateful soil as ours," said another of the Boscawen tenants, striking the table with his fist. "Do what I can, I can't make both ends meet; and there's Hearnshaw talking of raising the rent upon us! It's all very well for you with copyhold farms, and just a quit-rent to pay — I wish I'd the same holding; and yet you find enough to grumble at: but our land's set high, and it's going to be higher. If so, why, there's nothing for it but to emigrate. There's not much done here for us, and but little to be got. If the steward's as good as his word, I shall try my luck on the other side of the water."

“Better stop where ye are, Mather. It’s a long lane that has no turning: happen we may come to the end of the dark bit, presently,” said his next neighbour at the table. “Hearnshaw’s bark is worse than his bite, and he said nought about raising the rents, last court-day at Camelford. My Lord can’t live for ever, and the young gentleman, perhaps, may not be quite so hard upon us. It’s a wonder what becomes of all the money that’s carried out of the country. There’s not been a hundred pounds laid out this year upon the property; and if a roof’s out out of order, or a new fence wanted, the steward makes as great a boggle over it as if he had to thatch the barns and set up the palings out of his own pocket. Any how, that’s a fine new house he’s contrived to build for himself. That didn’t cost a trifle. The man that put it up for him told me ten thousand pounds wouldn’t cover the outlay.”

“No wonder there’s not much to spare for the oak-fencing,” said Mather, laughing. “The only thing we have to look to is the chance that this young Fleming, that’s just come of age, may be a better man than his grandfather. At any rate, he does not seem likely to live so fast. He’s sickly and puny, and always was so, from the time he was a baby.”

A deep groan from the end of the room, where the old man had been sitting silent, undisturbed, and almost forgotten, startled Dame Brock.

“Mercy on us, Simon! was that you? — See, Andrew, what’s the matter with father,” said the hostess: not waiting, however, for her son’s intervention, but hurrying to the dark corner of the ingle-nook, where, the fire having burned low, her husband’s figure was dimly discernible, bent almost double. “He’s had a fit, or something like it. Run, lad, and fetch the Doctor! He passed by half-an-hour ago, on his way to attend Morgan Price’s wife, at the Boscawen. Children are like to come faster than customers to that house, I fancy!”

Andrew looked with consternation at the pallid face of his father, as the dame drew back the curtain.

“The old man do look bad, surely! I say, one of you fellows, go and fetch the Doctor. I’ll bide to home. Feyther might want I. Look sharp, I say!”

Mrs. Brock was too much occupied and excited to abuse him for his disobedience; and even Andrew’s ill-favoured countenance expressed real concern and dismay.

“There’s been too much noise for him; his head’s not strong. You’d best break up

the sitting, my masters," said the dame, dismissing her guests without ceremony. "Andrew and I will get Simon to bed. I think he's coming to a little."

"What's that he says, mother?" exclaimed Andrew, bending his head to listen to his father's imperfect attempt at articulation. "I'm blest if he don't want us to send up street for the Passon! He must be bad. Dost think"—he added, in a hoarse whisper, and with a face as white as the sick man's—"dost think feyther's dying?"

The tears ran down Mrs. Brock's hard cheeks.

"Oh, I hope not, lad! Though he's not handy, we'd miss him above a bit. What is it he's trying to say?"

A slight flush passed over the pallid face supported on Mrs. Brock's arm, as Doctor Lawrence, with his usual active step and manner, crossed the threshold. The landlady's appeal had been more quickly transmitted and answered than her dying husband's seemed likely to be.

The surgeon saw in a moment that the case was, in all probability, a desperate one, and also that his patient was sorely troubled in mind. He listened attentively to the indistinct accents which Simon Brock, with labouring breath, contrived to utter.

“ St. Erme !” the Doctor said—“ that’s it. Your father wishes to see the clergyman. Very natural and proper ! Why do none of you stir ? Let somebody go to the Parsonage, and ask Mr. St. Erme to step here directly. You can say I sent for him, and that Simon Brock is as ill as he well can be,” he added, seeing some hesitation among his hearers.

“ It’s late, sir, to be fetching an elderly gentleman, like Mr. St. Erme, from his house,” said Dame Brock : “ but, of course, if Simon wishes it, and you think proper, some one will go for his Reverence. I wonder what put that into my poor old man’s head !”

“ Never mind what made him think of it. The wish is in his heart, and he is in no state to be gainsayed,” answered Mr. Lawrence, as Simon Brock repeated more distinctly the Rector’s name.

Andrew, more alarmed than he had ever been in his life, stumped off to comply with what he believed might be his father’s last request.

Dame Brock, who was a woman of discernment, saw in the Doctor’s firm countenance, and perhaps on her husband’s pallid brow, something which convinced her that it was useless to attempt to thwart them. She sat down, to wait the clergyman’s arrival,

putting the corner of her apron to her eyes.

“ Well, sir !” she said, presently, “ I suppose you know best ; but remember, I am not responsible. I don’t think Simon is himself to-night ; and I’m sure he’s not fit to talk to a person that’s such a stranger to him as Mr. St. Erme. If it was only for the thought of how ill he must be for our Parson to come to him, it would be more than my poor old man could bear ; but I’ll be ruled by you. If you think it right to frighten him to death, so let it be ! Why, sure enough, there is Mr. St. Erme ! Who would have thought he’d come so far, and so late, too, as it is ? I am sure it’s a great honour, and I take it very kind of his Reverence !”

Mr. St. Erme did not appear to have lost any time in visiting the sick man, who was represented by his son to be at the point of death. His hours were always late, and he had not retired to rest. When the message was delivered to him, he closed the volume he was reading, and went out at once, taking the short churchyard pathway to the inn. There were people yet lingering in the street to see whether the Parson would comply with the request of his old parishioner. It was a long time since any one at Lezant had sent for him at so unreasonable an hour.

Dame Brock opened the door quietly, and stood curtseying in the passage. The Rector took little notice of her fluent salutations, but went straight up to the couch on which her husband was lying. His manner was grave, but kind, as he stood inquiring from Doctor Lawrence into the nature of the attack, and afterwards spoke to the old man himself. Simon Brock made a feeble sign for his wife and Andrew to leave the room. Neither of them seemed inclined to obey.

“After you, Sir, if *you* please!” said Mrs. Brock, when the surgeon interpreted his patient’s wishes. “If it’s Simon’s wish to be alone with his Reverence, so be it; though I think a man’s wife is part of himself, and the best half sometimes. Go along, Andrew! but, if you please, Sir, I’d best remain with Simon. His memory’s quite gone. If he’s anything, poor lamb! troubling his spirit, he’s quite past recalling it. I’d best stop to make his meaning plain to his Reverence.”

The old publican again pointed to the door, looking first at Andrew, then at his wife, while he laid his hand on Dr. Lawrence’s arm to detain him. Dame Brock, with rage at her heart, was compelled to submit to his will.

When the door closed upon her, Simon seemed satisfied, but there was not much

intelligence in the gaze he continued to fix upon Mr. St. Erme, who hardly knew whether he was in a condition to understand and profit by the prayers he was preparing to offer. "I think there is something on his mind," said Mr. Lawrence, when the clergyman inquired his opinion. "Let us give him a little time to collect himself. Here is the Rector, Simon,—Mr. St. Erme. Would you like his Reverence to pray by you?"

The old man's sunken countenance lighted up. "Miss Mary!" he said faintly. "Where is my dear young lady?"

A very slight flush crossed Mr. St. Erme's face, which previously had seemed paler than the one resting on the pillow. Simon's once stalwart limbs were even now not so attenuated as those of the clergyman. He did not appear able to answer the feeble old man as fluently as he had spoken about his niece to Dame Brock and other persons in Lezant.

Simon Brock, with faltering earnestness, repeated the question. "I want to know," he continued, with more energy, "where my dear young lady is gone."

"Miss St. Erme, my poor old fellow, is not at home at present," said the Rector, at last. "She is in the habit of reading to you, I am aware. Cannot I supply her place?"

Was it for this that you sent to ask your Pastor to visit you?"

Simon Brock turned himself over uneasily. "No, no, Sir! Miss Mary,—it's only her voice I mind now. I don't believe what they tell me about her,—Miss Mary always spoke truth. Is she gone to her father?"

Mr. St. Erme started, as if the words struck to his heart.

"I trust not—I hope not!" he said faintly. "She is well, I believe. Let us drop this subject."

"Thank you, Sir—that's all. I only wanted to know about Miss Mary," said the old man, closing his eyes. "If she's well, maybe she'll come back soon, and not forget me. I suppose I may trust what you tell me of her?"

"My good friend," said the Rector, touched by his honest affection, "I am sorry I cannot answer your questions as explicitly as I could wish; but these family matters require delicate handling. As soon as my niece returns, or communicates with me, I promise to inform you. I know that her great kindness has made her much beloved in Lezant; but I was not prepared to find her temporary absence so much regretted. Lieutenant St. Erme having had the misfortune to lose his vessel on the rocks, it be-

came his duty to make his report of the calamity in the proper quarter. His sister, to the best of my belief, accompanied him."

Simon Brock lay quite still while the clergyman spoke. His brain was too confused for him to be able to follow any train of ideas but one suggested by present objects; and the Rector's face and form were associated with by-gone days, just as the surgeon's voice recalled the busy scene on Lezant headland.

"I'm glad to see you, Sir," he said, when Mr. St. Erme paused. "You be the Passon of our parish. I mind Colonel St. Erme well—better than any of the Lezant folk. I never see you look so like him before. Folks said he was sweet upon Mrs. Fleming—there was a deal of silly talk. Trade was brisk then, and good liquor set people's tongues going. Little and big, we were all in for it, as the Doctor there can tell ye;—why, even Andrew was on the lookout, too—a lath of a lad as he was. They called him 'Young Supernumerary.'"

"So, you were all busy that time, when the Nautilus landed her tubs!" said Mr. Lawrence. "I should think few things could escape such sharp eyes as must have been on the cliffs that night."

"Aye, aye, Sir! Those were jolly days

—no wonder you like to talk about them!” the old man said, with a gleam of pleasure in his countenance, as he glanced at the Doctor. “Lezant was all alive. Not a man bided to home. One and all—one and all—we were all out to work the tubs—folks as hasn’t been on such a lark since. I mind Helier of Woods — one of those French brothers I told ye about—he was out then, one of the busiest. We were close together. I can see him now, with his shortsighted-like eyes, peering down through the bushes. Andrew, he was in the broken ground, setting traps for rabbits—more shame for him! as his mother said, one night. ’Twas bad ways to bring him up in. You can’t expect much from him.”

“Helier of Woods!” said the surgeon. “You saw him out that night? And French Jerry—did you not tell me something of a meeting between them?”

“Surely, yes — they were brothers — Frenchmen—but ’twasn’t that I was going to tell ye about. I was thinking of the lad, Andrew, and how he ducked among the gorse to hide hisself from the Passon’s brother. You mind him, Sir?—he was a fine man—as tall, maybe, or nearabouts, as I was. The Passon’s nothing to speak of for height compared to the Colonel.

“ ‘ Hold hard ! ’ says I : ‘ what ’s that ? ’ —for I heard a shot fired ; and the Jersey-man, that was on his knees when I came up, turned sharp round upon me, and put something he held in his hand into his pocket. When he lifted up his face, it was as white as death. ‘ What made you fire, you fool ? ’ I said : ‘ where ’s the use of making a noise ? ’ ‘ I was only killing a rabbit, ’ says he, in his stuttering lingo ; ‘ don’t ye see them running about by dozens ? ’ I felt very angry with him. ‘ Why, there ’s Passon’s brother taking a walk on the cliff, ’ I said, ‘ and another man went by just now ; ’ but Helier—he were always a sulky chap—turned off, and didn’t answer me. Well, there was a scuffling among the bushes, and I went to the edge, and tried to look over ; but—how it happened, I suppose I never shall know—sometimes, I fancy, it was a shove I got—I lost my footing, and fell right down nearly to the bottom. Andrew seen it all, and more, too ; he were always uncommon sharp from a little one ; but his mother spoilt him. My dame told lies about our being out after the willie-wacks and puffins, and I ’m afeard Andrew didn’t speak truth at the trial. It ’s been on the tip of my tongue ever since Harry Mabb, that sails in the French schooner, was stopping here ; and, when we talked together

over our pipes, many things got clear to me that have been as if they were in a mist before. Anyhow, I'm glad his Reverence is here, for him and you to hear me make a clean breast of it."

The glimmer of intelligence in the old man's eye faded away, and he sank back exhausted. Mr. Lawrence hastily put up his note-book; and, after a brief examination of his patient, called in Dame Brock to attend her husband. Mr. St. Erme, meanwhile, appeared more than usually impassible; though some facts, which the old man had narrated, were certainly not previously known to him, and might seriously have affected the case brought against his brother.

There was, nevertheless, a depth of secret anguish in his heart which altered, in spite of his utmost endeavours, the tones of that clear but not rich articulation, as he lifted up his voice in prayer by the sick man's bed. Dame Brock, who was not now forbidden to approach, always declared that the Parson had never spoken so powerfully as when he prayed by her dying husband. She looked round for her son, wishing that he might share in the good influence which she felt to be working upon her; but Andrew, perhaps, afraid of a summons, and with an instinctive dislike to speaking the truth, had crept out of sight.

“ You’ll excuse him, gentlemen,” she said, as she stood at the door, curtsying to the clergyman and the Doctor; “ the lad’s untaught, and very ignorant. It would have done him good to hear his Reverence; but Andrew’s always shy with his betters. You see, he was but young when he went for a soldier, and he’s never been in the way of improvement since.”

When Doctor Lawrence, after administering a cordial to old Simon, followed Mr. St. Erme into the outer room, the clergyman was standing wrapt in thought before the fire. Its strong light played upon his features, haggard with suppressed excitement. On hearing himself addressed, he started and looked round with surprise at the rough boards and homely rafters, polished by smoke, of the rude inn; as if quite unconscious, previously, that he was not pursuing some abstruse train of thought in his own book-room. His thin features quivered, — his white skin flushed, — and, after a vain struggle to retain his ordinary calmness of manner, he answered, in a voice half choked by emotion, —

“ Not another word, I entreat, Sir! — not a word! If I had any motive strong enough to induce me to rake up the terrible past — if my unhappy brother were living — it might be my duty to follow up this faint thread of

evidence at any cost:—but this is not the case. I know that Edmund St. Erme is beyond the reach of praise or blame. A communication has been vouchsafed to me,”—he hesitated, upon seeing the surgeon’s blank look of incredulity,—his tone hardened as he went on: “it is, at least to my mind, an undoubted fact that Colonel St. Erme is dead. His son has emancipated himself from my control. Mary has voluntarily forsaken me. I will not, on the feeble word of a palsy-stricken, dying, half-imbecile old man, re-open wounds which, though scarred over, would still bleed at a touch.”

He turned away sadly and haughtily as he spoke, and, bending his tall, thin form, passed under the low doorway of the old inn.

CHAPTER XIII.

THOUGH times were hard, the new baby had found a welcome at the Boscawen Arms. Morgan Price looked as good-humoured as ever, when he opened the house-door gently to Doctor Lawrence on his return.

“ Step in, Sir, if you please,” he said, ushering him into the Lieutenant’s sitting-room. “ There is a gentleman here who will be glad to speak with you. Everything is going on well up-stairs.”

The surgeon gave his usual quick, intelligent glance at the person seated near the fire, with candles lighted on the table at his elbow.

“ The very man I wanted to see !” he said, entering briskly. “ Hearnshaw, how are you ? What brings you to this out-of-the-way little town to-night ?”

“ Oh, business, business ! of course,” said the active old man. “ I’ve no time to be ill. Don’t think I am going to consult you. Time enough if I’m laid up twenty years hence. There’s that tenant of ours at Woods — what

am I to do about him? He is not fit to manage the farm. The property is going to wrack and ruin, and yet we don't want to displace him. Candidly speaking, what do you think of the state he is in? Will he ever be fit for work again?"

"That is a wide question," said the Doctor, gravely. "To tell you the truth, I do not think Helier of Woods has been fit for work a long time. Impossible for a man like yourself to have set foot on the land without seeing marks of idleness and neglect. May I ask why you should be anxious to keep such a fellow in possession? I must own that I was never more surprised in my life, than when I heard you had promised to grant him a lease."

"Oh, that was only conditional!" said Mr. Hearnshaw, with some hesitation. "My Lord is not fond of changes. This man has never given us the slightest trouble. He has it in his power to give very important evidence respecting the life led abroad by the foreign lady of whom we were speaking the other day. It may be essential, if the point should again be brought in question, to call upon Jean Helier to prove what he knows to be the fact, that Madame left no son. The only child who survived her was a daughter."

"Indeed!" said the surgeon, drily. "I

thought you must have some good cause for tolerating such an ill-conditioned fellow. For my part, I would rather have him for an enemy than a friend. I should not like to fancy myself under any obligation to him. If you wish for my professional opinion respecting whether he will ever be restored to the limited share of health and mental capacity he has enjoyed for some years, it is this, — your tenant at the Grange will never be good for anything again. The only chance of his getting through his present serious illness lies in the old adage, that a man born to be hanged will not die of a fever.”

“Come, come, you are too severe upon him, Lawrence!” said the steward. “What makes you so hard upon your unfortunate patient?”

“Hard upon him!” answered the surgeon. “I am not a bit harder upon him than other people. The fellow has not a friend in the world, unless it be yourself and Lord Boscawen. The very dogs at his stable-door growl as he passes. As for his wife and children, he is an object of terror and disgust to them. Such a fellow has no business to live. Don’t expect me to patch him up for you. I should have thrown up the case, if, psychologically considered, it did not present some singularly interesting features. But he does not deserve to die in his bed, like a

Christian. Helier of Woods has a dark crime upon his conscience, and I want your assistance, and that of all able and honest men in the county, to establish the fact of his guilt. I believe him to have been the murderer of his wife's first husband, Captain Fleming."

"No, no! you are not far off the truth, but that is a mistake. Helier is a coward — a moody, silent, stupid fellow — cowed, perhaps, by the knowledge of some such dark, secret crime on the part of his associates — but not the actual murderer. Young Lancelot Fleming, my Lord's cousin, — a very fine young man, by-the-by! — has been with me on this very subject. I have not the slightest doubt, after hearing his story, that poor Fleming got into the way of the smugglers with whom his bailiff was connected — that daring Sussex band, who infested the country twenty years ago. They thought lightly enough of bloodshed, and I will not say that our friend Jean may not have been an accomplice; but French Jerry, his brother, a regular dare-devil, was the principal. Such is my fixed impression."

"Mine is different," said the surgeon. "I remember that bold gang of Sussex smugglers. Jean Helier was one of them. He was not always the downcast ruffian he looks like now. He was Mrs. Fleming's first lover, and had a strong motive for getting rid of her husband,

who, according to common parlance, was no one's enemy but his own. If the foreign brandy was good, depend upon it, Fleming cared not a jot whether it was above proof or had paid duty. I have just heard from an eye-witness, that there was a run of goods, that night, from the Nautilus, and that Jean Helier was on the cliff with a loaded weapon in his hand, when Captain Fleming passed over the headland. Simon Brock, the infirm landlord of the 'Three Crowns, saw him skulking in the thicket, and heard the report of his pistol not many yards from the spot where the body of his victim must have fallen over the precipice."

"I tell you, it was Gervase Helier, the convicted felon, who murdered Fleming," said Hearnshaw, obstinately. "There are now living in Lezant men more competent to bear witness respecting the events of that night than your imbecile patient. Why, his own son, that worthless soldier with the wooden leg, would, if I made it worth his while to speak the truth, confess that Dame Brock and the smugglers so threatened and cajoled him, in their fear of his letting out more than they chose to become public, that he had no peace of his life till he enlisted and left the country, which was made too hot to hold him. The leader of these reprobates, Gervase Helier, or

Jacob Mohr—no doubt he has a dozen aliases—went up to Woods, in search of evidence by which he hoped to strengthen his audacious claim upon Lord Boscawen. Fleming, who, in default of male issue in the direct line, was next heir to the title and entailed estates, hotly repudiated his pretensions. This, Lance has from his mother, and it shows there was ill-blood between them. Hitherto, Jean Helier has been reluctant to state what would criminate a person with whom he is so nearly connected; but we owe to him the intelligence that this notorious vagabond would return again to the Manor-house, for the purpose of removing Lieutenant Osborne. We were a trifle too late; otherwise, Jacob Mohr would be in our hands at this moment.”

“Just what I should expect from such a Judas! to betray his own brother!” muttered the surgeon. “Hanging is a great deal too good for him.”

“Oh, I do not wish to defend him!” said Mr. Hearnshaw. “I believe him to be a consummate rascal. It runs in the blood. But we must use the tools provided for us. On special occasions these mean dogs do their work well. There is this honest fellow—our host, the Welshman—should you have any objection to my summoning him? He is dead against smuggling, and has some reliable

information about La Belle Marie to give us, which I was just going to receive, when you came in."

Doctor Lawrence assented willingly; and, at the sound of the parlour-bell, Price immediately entered. The surgeon at once assailed him at his most vulnerable point.

"Anything to tell us, Price, about the contraband vessels?" he said. "I am in direct communication with the young officer who lodged in your house, and should like to forward the latest news stirring along the coast."

"By all means, Sir!" said Price, touching his cap, as if to the absent officer. "Lieutenant St. Erme is quite the gentleman. I believe we all know him best by that name. Anything I can do to serve him will not be long in hand. I do know something about the French vessels, and was wishing, only this morning, I had it in my power to forward the news to him."

"Out with it, man! In four-and-twenty hours he shall be in possession of it," said Mr. Lawrence. "By-the-bye, were not you the person who, on your own responsibility, went to Woods to look after the officer? Upon my word, considering the bad reputation of the place, I think it was a very fine thing to do!"

"Aye, aye, Sir; I went to inquire after

the Lieutenant at Woods; but I was a thought too late," answered Price, respectfully. "I lost the chance by calling on the Rector, who is also a magistrate for the county; and he did not think proper to authorise my searching the premises. He is a very strange old gentleman, and I could not feel satisfied with the view he took of the matter: so I went my own way to work. The Lezant people call me a fool for my pains; but no matter! I did what I thought right, and we can do no more, let what will come of it. Mr. Lawrence knows as well as I do that the Lieutenant had been at Woods not many hours before I reached the place; though, certainly, I did not find him. But it might be worth his while to hear, if he is safe and at liberty, that there is the chance of a greater seizure to be made one of these days at Woods, than when half La Belle Marie's last cargo lay hidden in the cave above the waterfall. I am as certain of this fact, as that I am speaking to you at this moment. There is, too," he added, in a lower tone, "a chance for him to take Jacob Mohr himself, if he were on the look-out now. An old fellow, who has long been a sort of go-between among the smugglers, carried a note yesterday to a young French lady, who is staying at Woods. I think Lieutenant St. Erme knows her. A person who is at present dissatisfied with

smuggling fare and smugglers' wages saw the note, and told me its contents. La Belle Marie will be off the coast early next week, to take off the young Breton girl, whom Jacob Mohr brought over with him last April. I think the Lieutenant would like to know this."

Dr. Lawrence hastily made a note in his pocket-book. The steward said jocosely, "Here is a renewal of the old romance acted at Woods nearly fifty years ago. A French lady waiting for a smuggling paramour to take her off! Are you certain, my good friend, these details are correct?"

"You see the Doctor thinks them worth setting down," said Morgan Price. "You can believe as much, or as little of it, as you please; but I tell you Jacob Mohr will be off the coast next flood, and the cellars of the Grange are likely to be full of smuggled goods. I think it might be of service to Lieutenant St. Erme if he had notice of these facts."

"Never fear, my good friend!" said Dr. Lawrence. "Depend upon it, I shall not bottle-up the information, like your friend the Rector. And now, let me run up-stairs, and see that poor little wife and baby of yours before I start. Any commands for Camel-ford, Hearnshaw? By the way, what are your news from abroad? The last accounts

were far from inspiriting. How does my Lord bear his grandson's danger?"

"Well, he bears up bravely at present," replied the steward; "but, of course, the blow, when it falls, will be a heavy one. I assure you, I have not mentioned to any one but you, whom I regard as an old friend of the family, what an unfavourable turn poor Mr. Fleming's illness has taken. His Lordship continues sanguine to the last — would not allow the tenants' dinner to be put off — his high spirit is still unbroken. Upon my word, it would not greatly surprise me if he were to marry again, sooner than allow the family honours and estates to go to a distant relative."

"I should imagine Lord Boscawen has had too much of matrimony, to render young Lancelot's chance of succession nugatory," said the Doctor. "He is, if I remember rightly, an older man than either of us. Well, I will call upon you again shortly, and tell you how my patient at the Grange is going on. It is a case which presents contradictory symptoms, such as it is my duty to investigate narrowly. I confess that I do not thoroughly understand it at present; and, whatever I may think privately of your tenant, it is incumbent upon me to see that he is dealt with fairly, and his recovery not

unnecessarily retarded. There! I have said more than I usually indulge myself with communicating on a purely professional subject; but I see you are interested, and I shall be glad of a quick-sighted ally. Are these your present head-quarters?"

"Yes; it is of no use for me to go home till I hear again from Italy, and I must be on the spot to look after this poor fellow's business. His head is quite gone," said the steward, lighting his bed-candle, after shaking hands cordially with his friend. "It is more than probable that our next meeting may be at the Grange. If Lieutenant St. Erme wishes to communicate with me, I shall be ready; and remember, I am a sworn foe to the contraband traders. Any assistance I can give towards capturing Jacob Mohr and his vessel is at your service."

The Doctor checked his brown horse, as he rode from Lezant to Camelford, the next evening; for, booming over the moor, came the sound of a tolling church-bell. The death-bed he had just quitted recurred to him, but Simon Brock was not a person of sufficient importance to have his demise notified from Lanteglos belfry. That summons, which calls all to their last account, had gone forth alike for the old publican and for the young grandson of Lord Boscawen.

As Mr. Lawrence pulled up sharply at the surgery-door, there were plenty of people able and willing to satisfy his curiosity. The mail had come in a few hours before, bringing the intelligence that the young man, in honour of whose majority the bells had rung joyously and the tenants feasted so recently, had sunk prematurely into a foreign grave; falling a victim to the consumptive malady hereditary in his father's family, at an age which made his loss a yet more irreparable calamity to his aged relative than the early deaths of his brothers.

CHAPTER XIV.

REINE'S vehement emotions of alarm and disappointment had subsided after a time, and even given place to cheerfulness. She was still the life of the old house, as she went about its dull rooms and passages, superintending the domestic duties, which the existence of sickness within its walls made doubly important. There was not a single sunless corner which her presence did not brighten.

Mrs. Helier looked at the young girl with wonder and distrust. There was nothing about her that tallied with the warm, quick impulses of the foreigner, but she was not quite so indifferent as usual to what was going forward. She moved about the house more, and often sat up part of the night in her husband's room, cooking invalid messes for him, and administering them silently, but punctually. Evidently, she was not a cheerful nurse; even Leah, with her rough ways, seemed preferable; and Helier always saw his young cousin enter with a visible sense of

relief : but the woman persevered in the performance of her conjugal duty with a steadiness for which Reine gave her credit, notwithstanding the starts and shrugs of nervous horror wherewith the invalid recoiled from her approach. Even when she sat, as was her wont, at the far end of the room, bending forward, with her dull eyes half-closed, but fixed upon him, as if ready to notice any change which might take place, Helier seemed to grow worse ; fits of shuddering came over him, and his fascinated glance could not, much as he desired it, avoid meeting the watchful gaze of the woman crouching by the hearth.

Creeping after their mother or Leah, half-awed by terror and a sort of dull grief, were Helier's unhappy children. Sometimes their evil nature prompted them to acts of mischief, and the housekeeper had to keep a strict watch upon the basons of broth and arrowroot, or the physic-bottles, for fear the little girls, out of curiosity or greediness, should make free with their contents. Zélie and Victoire had quite broken loose from Reine's control, and enjoyed a regular saturnalia of idleness, delivered from the stern supervision of their father, whose illness, nevertheless, was instinctively recognised as a subject for some kind of unreasoning sorrow, showing itself in

wild bursts of wailing, when, tired and fretful, the weary imps huddled into dark corners, and cried themselves to sleep.

A stormy autumn day was closing in, and the sun, piercing through lurid clouds, occasionally sent a red ray between the fir-trees, or was hidden from sight behind a dark canopy of boughs. The wind swept past, rustling the withered leaves, and bringing with it, at intervals, drifts of rain, which pattered against the windows; and the moaning of the sea, disturbed by deep under-currents, could be plainly heard. The night promised to be a wild one, and even the French girl's sanguine temperament seemed affected, as she walked from window to window of the parlour on the ground-floor where they happened to be together, while Mrs. Helier sat back in her chair, faintly moaning, as the roar of the wind and the wailing sound of the ocean-waves came to her ear. She was furtively watching Reine, who forgot that she was not alone, while she stood with her face close to the glass, looking out anxiously. The red glow slowly faded from the trunks of the fir-trees, leaving the wood dark and sombre.

“For whom are you waiting? Is any one coming here to-night?”—were questions uttered rapidly and with inquietude, which at last roused her from her reverie.

“ On attend toujours ! ” she said, almost unconsciously. Then, blushing, and glad that her companion could not understand her, Reine answered,—

“ It is nothing. I am not expecting any one—at least, not to-night. It is only a foolish habit I have of liking to look out. The play of the boughs—the light specks of sky, with the leaves crossing them—anything—nothing—amuses me. After all, you are, perhaps, right in thinking me little better than a child ! ”

She came away from the window as she spoke, and, lighting a candle, sat down to her work at the table; but, at any sound louder than usual outside the house, the muslin dropped from her hands, and she stopped to listen. Mrs. Helier still watched her.

“ Are you not afraid, ” the woman said, at last, in a low, dreary tone, “ to sit so in a line with the window, while the shutters are put back, and that light burning beside you? If any one should fire into the room, you would be killed. ”

Reine looked at her with surprise.

“ That is scarcely likely; but if you desire it, I will close the shutters. Who should harm us in this quiet place? ”

“ How can you tell? ” said Mrs. Helier.

“ People have come to their deaths by violent means here, before now. I tell you, Woods is a fearful place. How can you go about as you do, and smile to yourself, when such things have been done in this house? And he was your lover, too—I wonder at you! Do you think Jean would have run the risk of letting that poor lad escape? When he lay sick up-stairs, I thought how wrong I had been not to tell what kind of men these smugglers were. Why, he was on their track! If he had stayed here, he would have found out what happened, once. Do you never see him as I do, with the blue veins of his throat and temples swelled, as men look who have been suffocated in the water?”

“ Non, non! Dieu merci! I have no such awful visions,” said Reine, shuddering. “ I believe him to be safe. I am certain Captain Mohr would not harm him. Some day—before long, perhaps—we shall meet again.”

“ I do not believe it,” said the woman, leaning forward; “ I know these men better. Fleming brought those about the house whose faces I never wished to see again. I told him so, the day we parted in anger. I did not know then that he would never come back to me. I believe that the same thing has happened again; only, this time, they carried

their victim out upon the sea, and drowned him. I have seen him a hundred times since, stretched out stiff and stark, as drowned dead men are. That smuggling Captain who took blood from him, and afterwards carried him away — he murdered him.”

“Not so!” said Reine, taking a scrap of paper from her bosom; one which she had read many times. “If you knew Captain Mohr as I do, you would stake your life upon his honesty and kindness. I was angry with him once, for a little while, but I have forgotten it. See; look — I will trust you. Richard has written to tell me that all is well. Very soon Mynheer will come to take me back to France. We shall be happy together. That is why I watch the wind, and think of those at sea,” she added, blushing. “That is the hope which makes the smiles and songs come to my lips unbidden.”

“There, go, go! take your note; what should I want with it?” said Mrs. Helier, thrusting the paper back upon her as Reine held it out for her perusal. “Only mind,” she whispered, “that Jean does not catch sight of it. He is not asleep when he closes his eyes. I do not believe he will ever sleep again. Better that he should not. Men like him say strange things in their sleep. Such rest is not natural. Hide that note where it

was! I tell you, Jean would kill him if he saw his writing in this house."

She got up, as she spoke, and went to her own chamber, leaving Reine confused and frightened. The talisman in her bosom comforted her, however, by the assurance which it gave of her lover's safety. Meanwhile, Helier and the steward had been shut up together during the evening, busy, to all appearance, with papers and accounts. Helier's show of attention was a mere farce. He handed over, without looking at them, the documents asked for by Mr. Hearnshaw, or, if his eye ran down the long columns of figures placed before him, his mind did not take in their meaning.

At last, as if even the pretence of occupation was too much for him, Jean Helier pushed the papers away, and, laying his arms on the table, leaned his aching forehead upon them; while Mr. Hearnshaw, leaving him undisturbed, checked and filed the bills one by one and put them neatly aside.

"Is it your head that pains you so much?" he said, looking at the flushed brow just visible over the dark shocks of hair, untouched by grey, resting upon Helier's outstretched arms. "I see nothing wrong in the accounts, and have passed them for you."

Helier did not speak.

“There is, I repeat, nothing to trouble you with regard to the farm;—unless, indeed, you wish for a change;”—remarked the steward, impressively. “If this place is too much for you, there is a small thing vacant on the moor;—I could put you into possession immediately.”

Helier looked up quickly. “O mon Dieu! what is the matter? Is my Lord angry with me? Why, the fever has been raging at that house; a man was at death’s door there a month ago. You did not speak thus on the day when you promised to grant me a long lease—when you said no one should disquiet me. Is this my Lord’s gratitude?”

“We must have a little talk about that, when you are better,” said the steward, gravely. “Do not excite yourself. I am afraid your head is not strong just now. Are you sure that you recollect all which passed on the afternoon in question? Do you feel well enough to attend to me at present?”

Helier pushed back his thick hair from his forehead. “Say what you like. If I am not well now, I am never likely to be better.”

“That is a gloomy view of the future,” said the steward; “but it never does a sick man good to contradict him. I sincerely hope you may recover. We—my Lord, I

mean—has never had anything to complain of in you. You have always lived quietly and unobtrusively, and profited by Lord Boscawen's kindness without abusing his generosity. All I meant was that, in case of your not feeling equal to your present position, another of less responsibility was open to you. If you like to continue here, well and good. I will see what I can do for you, but you are aware that circumstances have altered. I do not suppose my Lord will wish to make changes. Still, at his age and mine, it is of no use looking forward too far."

The flush faded from Helier's forehead. He looked fixedly at the steward.

"You mean," he said, "that I shall be turned out of the farm here when his Lordship dies. The young heir, I hear, is gone. I have no favour to expect from my stepson, the next successor. Lance is my bitterest enemy. I thought my Lord would make his old servant safe by granting me a lease."

"He shall know, at all events, that you have lately rendered him a service of some value, which, I am certain, he will fully appreciate," answered Mr. Hearnshaw. "It is possible you might not find young Lancelot as easy to deal with as our poor old absentee master. My Lord, however, is hale and hearty yet, and may outlive us both. He is not, I can assure

you, any fonder than was Queen Elizabeth of talking of his successor."

Helier gazed moodily into the fire. His brow was furrowed with lines of anxious thought. Presently, the steward said,—

"Sometimes, men's memories are apt to fail them, when they suffer so much from headaches as you have done lately. It might be as well that you should keep clear in your mind the particulars of the information you gave me. Mind, it is for your own sake that I advise this, since I have it all down in black and white at the office."

"What is it you wish me to remember?" said Helier. "I would do anything to oblige my Lord; but I had a terrible shock on my return home. I do not think my head has been quite clear since."

"The more need for what I said just now; but there is no occasion to distress yourself. I have it in your own handwriting that you and Gervase were brothers—sons of the same father and mother. Your statement was to the effect that you were a boy on board your father's brig, *Les Trois Frères*, when she was off this coast on the night this house was burning."

"Oh, mon Dieu, oui!" said Helier, with animation. "I was only a lad, but I recollect

it well. That was a grand, a terrible sight! I shall never forget it."

"So much the better!" said the steward, blandly. "You were quite young, but still you were capable of observing and understanding what you saw. Your father took a boat ashore, and brought a lady off to the brig, that night?"

"That is quite correct," said Helier. "The lady was half wild with terror when she came on board, and clinging to her dress was a little female child. I can see them now."

"Good, good!" Your memory is excellent," said the steward. "That is sufficient. Madame had one child with her—a girl. You told me also the subsequent fate of that infant."

"You can ask her daughter yourself; she is in this house—the only living thing that cares for me: why should I not help her to her rights?" said Helier, laying down his head again, and bursting into tears. "Madame lived peacefully in our house, till after her daughter was grown up and married to my cousin Ambrose, a shipbuilder. That is truth, if I never speak another word."

"It will be greatly to the young lady's advantage, and I trust to your own, that his Lordship's mind should be set at ease on this

point," said Mr. Hearnshaw. "That story which was trumped up against him by your brother, Gervase Helier, you allow that it was an entire fabrication. You are ready to swear that Madame left no child but a daughter?"

"Why, even were it otherwise, what matters it?" said Helier, his dull eyes clearing a little, as he fixed them interrogatively on the steward. "Gervase—my unhappy brother—died years ago. Why do you persist in reviving these painful recollections? Reine is the French lady's only living descendant. My Lord surely owes me some little consideration for the good care I have taken of her since she became an orphan?"

"Assuredly; it will not be forgotten," said the steward. "Now listen to me, since you seem anxious to be of service, while I tell you how you can still more recommend yourself to his Lordship's favour. It is you who go over the same ground and agitate yourself unnecessarily. This foreign Captain, Mynheer, who gives us trouble just now—— I must have your aid to capture him."

"What can I do? Malheureux que je suis! How am I to take the bold skipper?" Helier inquired, opening his eyes wide with astonishment.

"Oh! it is of no use to look so innocent," said Mr. Hearnshaw. "You have not quite

forgotten your tricks with the Sussex smugglers. The question is, can you help me or not? If you refuse, others may be more willing. I hear, this man is likely to be off the coast again. Do you not know the spot at which he intends to land his cargo? Is there no preconcerted signal between you?"

"Of course — yes — that is ——" replied Helier, hesitating, "his friends could make sure of his coming. You see," he added, faintly smiling, "I am not quite oblivious of my old trade; but it is a long time since I had any hand in these ventures."

"Bah! nonsense! That will not do, Mr. Helier!" said the steward, quickly. "Do not say a word more on that point. I know more about you than you fancy, or my Lord would approve of. How do you explain the light that drew the King's vessel upon the rocks? My friend, there are people wicked enough to say that you lit the beacon with the hand which now trembles as it lies on the table. It was steadier, then. Do you think there would be much chance of my Lord's being persuaded to grant you the lease, if it came to his ears that his tenant had played a part in that bad night's work? Men rarely say such things without some hook to hang their tackle upon.

"Mind, I do not believe this scandal!"

he continued, fixing his small, twinkling eyes upon Helier. "We will not inquire just now what is or has been your connexion with Jacob Mohr; but his visit to you at Woods was by no means the first he has paid to this coast. Nearly twenty years ago, there was a landing made here from a foreign brig—the gentleman who held your present position met with a violent death. Colonel St. Erme had no more to do with it than I had. His son has obtained a fresh clue, and is determined, at any cost or trouble, to bring the guilt home in the right quarter. Between him and young Fleming, both on the alert, both ardently interested, the truth is sure to be elicited."

Helier raised his head, but he did not look at the steward.

"That is an old story," he said, in a low tone. "Are you wise, Sir, in raking it up again? The Colonel had a fair trial, and every advantage money and court favour could give him. If people did not make out the truth then, it is scarcely likely they should do so now. Why, men and women have grown old and died since, who were young at that time."

"Yes, and *remarried*," said the steward. "It is the same wicked old world, to all intents and purposes, as in Noah's day. People marry and remarry, build houses, sow seed,

and plant vineyards, whatever may be hanging over them. You must keep awake a little longer and attend to me. We believe—that is, Lieutenant St. Erme and I—that one of the smugglers was the man who shot Fleming. *I* believe it to have been the foreigner who visited him that night, and that we see him again in the skipper, Jacob Mohr. Now, will you help us to apprehend him?”

Helier rose from his seat giddily, still keeping his hand upon the table.

“I will at least do my best,” he said. “You must let me communicate with my friends. Above all, if I am to live, I must have rest. This Dutchman is no friend of mine. It is nothing to me whether he hang or drown.”

“Well, I am glad you see it from that point of view,” said Mr. Hearnshaw, contemptuously. “Let him answer for himself; let him account for the manner in which the night was spent when the *Nautilus* ran into Lezant harbour, and the cliffs were watched from point to point of the headlands, yet never a word said of the run for years and years. Ah, my friend! it was one of your own old clique—those jolly Sussex and French smugglers, who kept these west-country villages alive—sent poor Fleming that night to the other world. Whether I speak in your

favour or not, about this matter of the lease, to Lord Boscawen, must depend entirely on the assistance you are able to render us. Meanwhile, there are strange reports afloat. I advise you not to go much abroad till your head is stronger. These vague rumours are very disquieting."

"Excuse me, sir. I think I have talked long enough," said Helier, feebly. "When the time comes, I will do your work well; but I am very weak now. You must see I am not equal to discussing this subject longer."

"No, you look very ill; shall I tell your wife to come to you?" said the steward, rising. "You should go to bed at once."

"Not my wife — not Phœbe!" said Helier, while a shudder of pain or aversion shook his whole frame, and forced him to sit down again. "I do not want any one. For the present, I would rather be alone and quiet. Ah, mon Dieu! my head is splitting with torture."

He bent it again low on his folded hands; and the steward, after a momentary survey of his shrinking form, left the room silently. Before quitting the house, he told Leah not to leave her master too long alone, as he seemed sadly out of heart. The woman carried her work into the chamber where Helier remained, dozing or stupefied; rousing

himself with difficulty to take some of the slight refreshment brought to him by his wife. Nothing appeared to do him good, and he put down the cup with a shudder, saying that the taste of food was odious to him. Mrs. Helier, satisfied with the cold performance of her self-appointed task, withdrew; and the mess remained almost untasted on the table, at the elbow of the jaded, haggard, unshorn foreigner, as he sat, feeling like an outcast, at the fireside of his English home.

CHAPTER XV.

THERE were tears in Reine's bright eyes as she stood at the window of the parlour on the ground-floor, looking out upon the misty woodland: She was listening now, with nervous dread, for the Doctor's footstep. Her face, as she turned it again and again from the window towards the open door, was blanched with terror. Now and then, as the damp wind stole across her forehead—for the air had seemed so stifling to her in those gloomy chambers, that she had put back the casement—Reine fancied that the gale, which blew straight from the sea, whispered comfort; but, the next moment, a dim foreboding of evil shot, like a sharp, physical pang, across her heart; and it appeared as though, while all within doors was so dark and drear, nothing could reach that ill-fated dwelling but tidings of shipwreck and disaster.

“So! the children are ill? Just what I expected. Fevers and colds always go through a household. How have you escaped, Made-

moiselle? I declare, my last prescription acted like a charm!" said Doctor Lawrence, when Reine stopped him as he was hurrying to the door.

The young Frenchwoman blushed. "Yes," she said, "you did me much good. Let me thank you now. I could not in my cousin's sick-room. What do you think of him, this morning?"

The surgeon hesitated. "Well, I scarcely know what to think. He ought to be better. Are you sure the effervescing draught was rightly mixed? Did you administer it, as you promised, yourself?"

"No; Mrs. Helier took it from me. She was in the next room, and heard your directions. One cannot be more careful and punctual than she always is, and she likes to give the medicines to her husband with her own hands."

"Humph! That was not in my prescription. When a medical man is employed, his orders should be obeyed to the letter. This is not an ordinary case, and I doubt whether Mrs. Helier is in a sane state of mind. At all events, I did not put the bottle into her hands, but into yours. Do you think, Mademoiselle, after that admirable tonic which I slipped into your timid, but willing grasp, at the same time—that elixir which has made

your cheeks glow and your eyes glisten, and preserved you from the effects of the malaria creeping through this house — that I did not deserve to be attended to more carefully? How do you know that I may not have another billet-doux in my pocket for you?”

“ Ah, you have a letter for me?” said Reine, colouring still more deeply. “ You will not punish me by keeping it back! I have done all in my power for my poor cousin, but I could not banish his wife from her place by his side. Pauvre femme! she is very unhappy. She tries, I am sure, to do her best.”

“ Very likely,” said Mr. Lawrence, drily; “ but I prefer having nurses, not wives, to deal with, in cases like this, of life and death. No use talking. I must find a person who will obey me unscrupulously, and without questions. No, Mademoiselle!” he added, meeting Reine’s wistful glance, “ I have not got another letter for you to-day. I only suggested it to tease you. These children — where am I to find them? Is their mother likely to be in their nursery?”

“ They are in Leah’s room, but I do not think their mother is with them,” said Reine, leading the way. “ Shall I say you wish to see her? At this hour she is generally in her chamber, which is next her husband’s.”

“ Oh, never mind ! never mind ! ” said the Doctor, with a gesture which showed no particular anxiety for the interview. “ Better, perhaps, she should not be present. I want to ask the housekeeper a few questions. Be so good, Mademoiselle, as to show me the way.”

He said no more as they crossed the stone-flagged passage, and ascending a back flight of stairs entered the sleeping-room, where lay the two sick children, well covered up with blankets, a large fire burning in the grate, and Leah attending upon them. The Doctor spoke kindly to the little girls, who, fretful and languid, stared at him for a moment, and then hid their faces under the counterpane without replying. Mr. Lawrence took Leah apart, and spoke with her for some time privately. He then took up and tasted the contents of a cup, in which she had just mixed some arrowroot.

“ Could not be better arrowroot, Mrs. Scriven ; not a fault to be found with it. Thanks to your careful treatment, there is not much harm done : at least, not at present. You are wise in keeping these young ladies under your own eye. But you are too small a staff in this house. I shall bring a regular nurse to sit up with your master, and give him whatever he has to take. Mind you pre-

pare his food yourself, and don't let the children meddle with his messes. See that the jars or bags you take your flour or arrow-root from are tight and strong, and have not been tampered with. In these old houses the rats make strange work. Are you much troubled with them? I know of a capital dose to keep them quiet."

"Indeed, Sir, it would be very useful. They run over and destroy everything," answered the housekeeper. "My mistress did say she would have them got rid of; and, I believe, sent for some poison: but I am always afraid to scatter such things about. You never can feel certain that some cat or dog, or even these children who have their fingers in every hole and corner, may not get hold of what would put them to terrible torture."

"Exactly. Spoken like a kind, reasonable woman—just what I take you for," said the Doctor, approvingly. "You think there was some poison bought? I wonder whether it was the same nostrum I was going to recommend, for the speedy destruction of vermin! Have you any idea what became of the packet? I am sure you would not leave it about carelessly."

"It never was in my possession," said Leah, gravely. "I am not sure that it ever came to the house at all. All I know is, that

my mistress talked of sending for some ; but she has a weak memory, and may not have thought of it again. I have said all that I know about it."

"How long do you take to put on your bonnet? I don't half like leaving you in this miserable place," said the Doctor, slowly following Reine out of Leah's premises. "That man's fever may turn to the worst kind of typhus at any moment. What am I to say to Lieutenant St. Erme, if he writes to me again, and inquires if I have taken proper care of you? Shall I bring a chaise to the door, this evening, and carry you off?"

"Impossible!" said Reine, smiling. "You are very good, but I must take my chance. I run no more risk than others. You said we were too few in the house. I could not leave my poor cousin and the children."

"Well, there may be too few and too many. If you take the complaint, it will only add trouble to trouble. But you are a good girl, and I think you are right. That poor man is in a shocking state of mind and body, and you will have your reward some day for your goodness to him. I have told him I am going to take his wife away. He is worse whenever she goes near him. In fact, she must be put under restraint to prevent her injuring herself or others. She is

crazy enough, with her short memory, to be forgetting where she put the arsenic for the rats, and giving it to her husband instead of James's Powders. Adieu! Mademoiselle; I am sorry you do not think me old enough to be a sage protector. By the way, can you tell me when La Belle Marie is likely to be off the harbour? Her mate promised to bring me some tulips. I declare these old walls are literally crumbling to pieces!" he added, knocking down a bit of the decaying stonework with the butt-end of his whip, as he mounted his horse at the door; "and you know the old adage, that even the rats desert a falling house!"

He rode away as he spoke, leaving the young foreigner to return with a yet more depressed spirit to her various duties. The colour had quite faded from her cheek as she went up-stairs, and her heart beat when she opened softly the door of the porch-room where Helier was sitting. He looked up quickly, his eyes bright and restless from fever, and took with gratitude from her hand a cooling beverage, which she prepared for him carefully, according to the Doctor's directions. Afterwards, when she brought him some broth she had herself made, the sweet smell of the thyme strewn over it revived his

languid appetite, and he finished the contents of the cup before giving it back to her.

“Merci!” he said. “Ah! that tastes well. It is as if my good mother had seasoned it expressly for me. Leah’s English messes have no flavour, or a scent and taste I do not fancy; and hers are not the worst. How are my poor little children?”

“Better,” said Reine, cheerfully. “They will be well to-morrow—now, they are in their beds and sleeping. Do not afflict yourself about them longer. Perhaps your malady also may soon take a favourable turn. You have more appetite to-day.”

“That is because I have confidence in you,” said Helier, in an agitated whisper. “See, Reine, I am falling away. Nothing nourishes, nothing strengthens me. Physic is no remedy. Rest does not take away these racking pains. My hair is dropping off in handfuls. In short, I am dying. Ah! it is easy to say that; but to feel it—to know that the warm sun will only shine upon my grave—to look forward to an hereafter, which is dark and uncertain—that is terrible, indeed!”

He sank back shivering in his chair.

“Till yesterday, I thought I should get better. I hoped so—now I am not trustful.

There is something more than common amiss with me. Was that Mrs. Helier's footstep? Don't let her come in! The Doctor promised that I should not be tormented."

"There is no one here but I — your cousin and friend," said Reine, speaking as usual, when they were alone, in French. "Be tranquil; nothing shall harm you. I will not leave you."

"That is right!" he answered, gratefully. "Ah! I like to hear you say it. Reine, will you forgive me if I have at any time seemed unkind, neglectful? I am not always quite myself; but still I think I have merited some little portion of your regard. At all events, those who lived at the old Breton farm — my father and mother — they were kind. The old Captain of Les Trois Frères, he has taken you on his knee, and sung his sea-songs to please you, a hundred times. You have the lively refrain on your lips often. Do you remember the aged couple? What are your earliest recollections of Brittany?"

"Oh, they are all bright and pleasant!" said Reine. "The ancient farm, with its black-and-white chequered woodwork and deep casements framed in with Provence roses, and the cattle in the meadows. I used to hide among the osiers when I was a little girl, less

than Zélie or Victoire, and wait for the Captain, my good uncle, to pass by in his boat. Our house was close to the river on which he often sailed, and when he saw me he would take me on board. That was many years ago, but I have not forgotten it."

"Eh bien! I am the old Captain's son. When he was dead, and you an orphan, I remembered your case," said Helier, looking up and speaking more resolutely. "Mademoiselle, I am going to tell you what may, perhaps, make you angry; but, no matter — it was all done for the best. You will say that I might have acted differently — perhaps so; but I did not know whether you would ever find a better home than the one I offered you under my own roof. Still, it was not such as you ought to have had, and I believe now that your claims will be acknowledged. Your mother, Mademoiselle, was the daughter of that poor French lady who once inhabited this house. Wounded in her honour — cruelly ill-treated, she applied for help to a compatriot. He took pity on her tears and sorrows, and gave her his and his wife's protection, and a not unhappy home under his roof. Her daughter, brought up among us, became attached to and espoused my cousin, Ambrose Helier—your father."

Reine listened with emotion. "I do not

see any cause for anger in this history," she said. "Your parents seem to have been that poor lady's best friends."

"I am glad you think so," replied Helier. "That is how it appears to me. Though she came among them as a fugitive, they always treated Madame with respect, and religiously believed the sad story she told them. But it was not so with others. Representations of her wrongs were made, with or without her consent, to Lord Boscawen, but he was always insensible to the appeal. My unhappy brother, Gervase—ah! you see the force of habit—I cannot help calling him my brother, though he was not the son of my parents. He was born in France, soon after his mother landed from Les Trois Frères; and the steps he took when he came of age to vindicate her, and cause himself to be acknowledged by Lord Boscawen, were the cause of his ruin. Ah! he was so handsome—so like a nobleman! When he was quite little, they all called him 'Monsieur le Vicomte!' One would have thought any father must be proud of him, but from first to last he was the object of persecution; and if I have been favoured, it was because, seeing its uselessness, I did not bring forward any obnoxious claim. See, Mademoiselle! that is my fault—that is where I have erred towards you. Yet, at last, you will

benefit by the policy which has guided me. Mr. Hearnshaw tells me he is certain you will be amply provided for. That is what I wished to say to you. When you are in prosperity, let me have a place in your recollection."

"If I had power to do you good, I should, most surely, not forget the gratitude I owe your family," answered Reine. "But does Lord Boscawen still disavow his first marriage? If so, I will receive no favour at his hands."

Helier hesitated. "That is another matter. My Lord is a proud man, and would suffer too much from any scandal or *éclat*. Besides, there are important interests involved. Lord Boscawen will never be brought to admit the rights of a son born after Madame quitted him, and there is a strong report — Ah, now we come to a point I wished to touch upon — that poor Gervase is still alive. I will tell you, if you have patience, a little more about your uncle. In all respects we were unlike, though we were brought up in the same house and handled an oar together. He was so *débonnaire* and gracious, all women loved him. Well, he had no resources, and he took a share in our trade. He was a dashing, daring smuggler. I would have laid down for him my life; — every one knew,

however, that we were only foster-brothers. At last, his luck failed him. His claim upon Lord Boscawen raised up for him foes, and when he had the ill-fortune to be taken prisoner in a fight with the Revenue officers, such influence was exerted against him that the severest penalty England's laws could lay upon him was inflicted. For seven years he was sent beyond seas — to a hard lot in a penal settlement, among criminals; but even that did not break his high spirit. He burst his chain — he escaped; — he, with his quick wit, is said to have made money in the East; — to have traded, under another name, between the Dutch settlements and France. But it cannot be true; — he must have died in exile. There is no good foundation for the tale that he lives again in the smuggling Captain, Jacob Mohr.”

Helier stopped abruptly. His face, no longer pallid, burned with a feverish glow. His voice failed him. Reine, as she recalled the many traits she had witnessed in Mohr, of high chivalric feeling and delicacy, felt half-disposed to wish that the mystery which had always hung over the skipper's early life and connexions might thus be solved.

“Are you sure,” she said, “that the difference is greater than long years of imprisonment and hardship might effect? Lord

Boscawen's sons and descendants by his last marriage are no longer living, and there is a greater chance now of his being inclined to do justice to his rightful heir."

Helier's agitation increased. "No, no! he is not one to confess and make restitution. If Gervase Helier, *mon frère de lait*, has survived the cruelties heaped upon him, let him beware how he sets his foot on English soil. He would meet the doom of an escaped convict—*Mon Dieu!* he would be hunted like a wild beast—he would not have a place to lay his head. I do not say that this man is Gervase Helier— I do not believe it. I think he is another person altogether, and that his errand is quite different; but if I am wrong—my foster-brother and I have been parted almost twenty years; night and day, these thoughts pursue me, till my brain is partly turned—if *La Belle Marie* runs into the jaws of the Revenue sharks, her Captain is a ruined man."

"Let us, then, do all we can to prevent such a disaster," said Reine, perplexed and frightened. "It is for me that Jacob Mohr will incur this peril. Can I not give him warning to keep off the coast?"

"Yes! that is it; that is what I desire," said Helier, eagerly. "Bid him keep away from *Lezant*. But how to communicate?—

I am so ill, and it is no woman's work to put out the light at Porth Hern. You could not do it."

"I can do all to save a friend. Perhaps Jacob Mohr is even nearer; but, whatever he may be, I am bound to serve him," said Reine. "What must I do?"

"Listen!" said Helier, earnestly; "but I tell you again, it is beyond your strength; and you may be exposed to personal risk. When the smuggling vessels are expected—as a token that the coast is clear, and the water deep enough to bring them in, close to the scaffolding on the cliff where the slates used to be lowered—a light is kindled at the ancient landing-stairs below Arthur's Castle. I have calculated that the tide will serve on Thursday; and Jacob Mohr, if he sees the light, will run in, and to a certainty be taken prisoner with all his crew: but if some friendly hand were to extinguish the beacon, he would guess that danger threatened."

"That is sufficient," said Reine. "Be at ease:—Jacob Mohr shall not rush blindly on destruction. I am no coward, and I promise to undertake the duty which sickness prevents your performing. Now you have talked enough, and I hear the sound of wheels. It is probably the nurse sent to attend on you by Dr. Lawrence. I will go and receive her."

Helier did not speak ; his animation had subsided, and his face was ghastly pale ; and while Reine, in a glow of generous excitement, contemplated courageously the dangerous exploit he had suggested, her cousin brooded in cowardly terror over the various contingencies likely to baffle the scheme he had devised to free himself from the dangers which he had not heart, or force of mind or body, to meet like a man.

Before nightfall, the newly-arrived nurse, acting under the Doctor's instructions, had taken up a position of authority in the household. Leah, though she was a woman fond of her own way and prejudiced against strangers, seemed, on this occasion, to find the woman's presence a relief from some unexplained source of anxiety, and willingly succumbed to her. Mrs. Helier did not make her appearance at all ; and when Reine went to inquire after her, the room-door was locked, and its occupant made no answer to her request for admission. The children, tired out with Leah's sharp remedies, after waking somewhat refreshed, wailed themselves again to sleep. Helier tossed about, restlessly, all night, and towards morning slept heavily. The nurse, though occasionally closing her eyes, to rest them, as she averred, while she sat bolt upright in her chair, was

yet alive to the slightest sound made by the mice behind the wainscoting. Reine came softly in and out, bringing with her a gleam of cheerfulness even into that gloomy chamber; while Leah dozed or waked by the kitchen fire, starting up from time to time as some noise overhead, or the chirping of the crickets on the hearth, dispelled her fitful slumbers.

CHAPTER XVI.

OLD Simon Brock's high-backed oaken arm-chair was set straight against the wall; his Bible and hymn-books were ranged on a shelf above the little table which formerly stood at his elbow. His place at the hearth, in the inner compartment of the taproom at the Three Crowns, had for some days been empty. The dame, her comely face a little paler under the shadow of the decent widow's cap which she had assumed, moved about briskly, yet with a somewhat sobered air. Her temper did not appear to have been softened by affliction. Andrew was more often in disgrace than ever; and his mother's remarks had a caustic acerbity which, tough as was the rind wherein his nature was encased, sometimes pierced to the core.

Custom had not deserted the place since its master's death. Old Simon's absence from the chair by the hearth made little

difference in the habits of its frequenters; though, from the force of association, they often missed him; and as the widow's grief was not likely to be tinged with superabundant delicacy, their feelings were freely expressed. Mrs. Brock glanced from time to time at the empty corner, even when in her busiest and crossiest moods; or put back the curtain, involuntarily, to see if the old man wanted anything. "It was a sore case," she said, "to be a lone woman, with no one better than such a graceless son as hers to keep up the respectability and popularity of the establishment."

The long benches in the taproom were filled from end to end. Andrew had hard work to supply what was required, quickly enough to avoid his mother's rebukes. Outside, the night was wet and windy. The rain dropped from the thatch dismally, and fell occasionally in a long, dreary splash from the shoots under the eaves. A thick November fog darkened the air, and the dame gladly lit up her tin sconces, and drew the heavy shutters across the low, wide casements, to exclude the dismal prospect, and, perhaps, to prevent the convivial party from being visible to any occasional passer-by.

"There's not much sign of improvement in the weather," remarked the mistress of the

house, after shutting up the windows and outer door. “Drip! drip! I’m tired of hearing the rain. His Reverence’s glass has been falling, I’m told, since Sunday; and here’s the end of the week coming on. Thursday’s full moon, folks said, was to bring a change; but if there’s any, it’s rather for the worse than better. Andrew! hast got ne’er a log of dry wood fetched in? This might have lain soaking in the street: it does nought but smoke and smoulder. Fetch a fagot out of the cellar. Is the lad deaf, that he does not hear me?”

“I hear ye fast enough, mother — no need to scare the folks in the street by talking so loud; but I’m not minded to go into that plaguy dark vault without a light. And how shall I manage to carry one, if I bring the logs? Can’t one of you men come and help me?”

“What a goose the lad is! He’s frightened at his own shadow. It’s as much as I can do to get him to help me through the work, with bringing up the logs and the ale. He shut himself up in the cellar to hide from his Reverence and the Doctor, one night, when my poor old man was dying — such a time to be playing his tricks! — and what he saw down there is more than I can say; but he’s scarce been bold enough to look over his

own shoulder since," said the dame, contemptuously, after her son, having found a coadjutor among those present, had descended with him through the trap-door leading to the cellar. "Search as I might, when the gentlemen wanted him, that lad was nowhere; and at last, when I bethought me of the trap, and lifted it, he was sitting on the lowest step, shivering, and vowing he had seen a ghost. I've no faith in spirits myself, but Andrew was always timid, and his father's being took for death so sudden scared him. I don't think his Reverence has ever been exactly himself either from that time. I was quite against sending for him; but Simon, poor soul! would have his way, and the Doctor humoured him. I believe the Parson has not set foot outside his own door since."

"I heard 'twas a stranger preached for him; and when the Boscawen family vault was opened by the old Lord's order, as the steward said, because he was bringing home his grandson's body to be buried there, Mr. St. Erme was too ill to take any charge," said one of the Lezant boatmen. "We all looked out, night and day, for the craft, but nothing like it came into our port. It's seldom we poor fellows get a job, and folks in grief pay better than others. What kept them away? The wind has been fair for

entering the harbour, and a corpse won't be hurt by a shower. It's better for a burial than sunshine."

"My Lord has changed his mind entirely, and is not coming to England," said the farmer from the moor. "Landlords who have rack-rented their land, and left their property to the mismanagement of agents for half a century, are not over-fond of coming home. I hear the young man was buried in foreign parts, with scarce a decent attendance. Not half-a-dozen folk followed the coffin."

"If all's true that's said in the papers, there was no occasion for much ceremony. The young gentleman was no more Lord Boscawen's heir than you or I," observed another of the tenants. "Why, it was in black and white among the news last market-day—I read it myself—that my Lord was married to a Frenchwoman before he ever saw his late lady; and I remember hearing the same story years ago, when it was stoutly contradicted. There was a young man then that claimed to be his Lordship's son by a foreign wife; and I dare say it was truth. He was a wild one in his young days."

"You may say that!" exclaimed the dame, pushing back the wide strings of her cap with a flush of virtuous indignation. "He's like enough to have cast off a woman when

he was tired of her; and if she was foreign and helpless, who was to take her part? Was it Madame, think you, that lived at Boscawen's Grange; and, for that matter, is said at nights to walk still? Was she my Lord's true wife?"

"Aye, aye! I believe that was it. At any rate she was French; and her son, of course, ought to have his rights. What's more, my Lord is minded to give way. He has none of his own blood left but this foreign brood. The French lady died long ago; but her daughter, or granddaughter folks say, came over last spring with Mynheer from Brittany."

"Simon said, she was a lady born. Trust him for knowing!" said Dame Brock. "I thought she was something out of the common, myself; but she scarce stopped an hour, and I only saw her once afterwards. Andrew! art asleep, or drinking? Come up, I say! Thee'st been long enough to fetch twenty fagots. Remember, there's work cut out for you. It's nigh upon the time to look out if the light at Porth Hern is burning."

"You don't mean to say that I am to go all that way to-night?" said Andrew, emerging from the cellar with the light in his hand, while his comrade carried the heavier burden of the wood. "I am not well,

mother! I am not up to the thing at all. There's too much laid upon me since poor old feyther's death. Hang me, if I stand it!"

"Why, you lazy loon! would you have the schooner tossing about the Point, and not run up a signal to tell her the tide serves for landing, and the coast's clear? I promised the Dutch skipper myself that all should be right, and I never broke my word yet, and won't now. All work is well paid for, as you know; and others will be ready enough; or I'll go myself, if there isn't a man here to do my errand. Lance Fleming used to look after the light when the vessels were expected in; but he's turned informer, and sets himself against the smuggling. It won't do to trust to him. Maybe, when he finds that he's not my Lord's heir, he'll sing his song to another tune. It's shameful to think how he has treated his old friends. For my part, I'm glad to hear that he's like to be disappointed."

"I'd rather not have anything to do with the light," said Andrew. "Can't you let the smuggling alone, mother? It don't suit women to meddle with such matters. They always make a mess of them. There's too much noise and clatter here to-night. We'll have the Excise upon us: they are a deal sharper than they used to be. Is the door barred? It's a time of night for decent

folks to be in their beds, instead of mothers sending their sons half-a-dozen miles off on a fool's errand."

"I tell ye what, Andrew, the dame's right, and thee'st a coward!" said one of the smugglers. "Don't show the white feather quite so plain! I never heard you were fond of going to bed early before. If you're afraid, and not ashamed to own it, I don't mind if I go along with you. Somebody must look after the light. Why, it might cost Jacob Mohr his vessel if the coast were dark; and he'd not easily forgive such bad faith. I'd rather face all the ghosts in the churchyard than win his ill word."

"Come along, then!" said Andrew, cheered by the proposal. "As long as I am in good company I am not afraid; but those cliffs, on dark nights, are not pleasant; no, nor the sands neither, with the sough of the waves filling the caverns, and coming up as fast as sea-horses, with their flying manes of white foam. I don't like it, and no more would the old woman; but it's easy to talk when you're safe to sit by the fireside, and leave men to do the rough work. She likes fingering the Dutchman's fine goods, and gets her share; and I don't grudge it her, only for her sharp tongue. Now, my hearty! one more pull at the flaggon, and I'm with you."

The dame opened the door herself for her son's departure, and fastened it after him. She came back to the fire-side, and sat down gravely. The men at the table went on talking, but she did not heed them. Perhaps, in her own mind, hard as she looked, she was thinking of her poor old husband ; for she lifted her eyes quickly, more than once, and rattled the rings of the curtain impatiently, as the thought, which had been habitual to her for many years, recurred, that he might want her help to get up-stairs to bed. She was sad at heart to think that the poor old man was no longer there, whom she had so often vexed and thwarted.

Andrew scarcely heard his comrade's jeering remarks, as they mounted the steps cut in the rock, and, avoiding the way by the churchyard, walked quickly along the path close to the edge of the overhanging cliffs. His mind was full of terrors ; some visionary, others real ; and he was so used to the scoffing and rude jests of his bolder associates, that the man's words whistled past him like the wind. At his suggestion, they did not cross the sands, where they would have run some danger of being overtaken, between the headlands, by the advancing tide, but pursued the old bridle-track over their summit.

The smuggler knew every inch of the

ground, as well by night as by day, and stalked along fearlessly; but Andrew seemed to find his lameness a greater trouble than usual. Perhaps, his recent visit to the cellar had unsteadied his faculties; for more than once he stumbled, and threatened to turn back: but, as his companion persevered, he gave the preference to proceeding in company, over a solitary walk homewards of three or four miles. At length, still disputing, they came to a high point of the coast, from which, even at that hour, the long strand stretching away beyond Arthur's Castle, with its white fringe of surf and black sea-wall of crags, was plainly visible. The night was overcast; the moon not yet risen above the high moorland district, to the eastward; but, near the water's edge, where the ruins of the old landing-stairs still showed some broken, crumbling steps, above the shore, a light was burning clearly.

“Hurrah!” said Andrew, stopping short. “Hang me, if I go another yard! There's the old tar-barrel alight, burning jollily. That must satisfy the old woman. I vote we go back at once, and finish the flaggon. I'm cold to the backbone.”

“Wait a bit,” said his companion. “Is that anything moving? — Yonder, on the sands, like a woman's petticoats? Hold your

tongue, you fool!—What can she be doing? 'Tis a girl and a dog.—Hold hard!—Why, you're not going to run away?"

The man held Andrew fast, in spite of his struggles.

"O Lord! O Lord!—Don't you see what it is?—Let go, I say!" exclaimed the coward, under his breath. "Don't you know that the French lady put off from those stairs? Some say she's as often seen there as at Woods. It's not likely a mortal woman would walk there at night."

The extreme loneliness of the place certainly gave some colour to this suggestion; and, as a slender form flitted across the sands towards the landing-place, Andrew's companion felt a slight shiver pass over him.

"It is a strange thing, certainly," he said. "Why, we're miles away from any dwelling! The house at Woods is nearest, and that's a good bit off. Anyhow, it's a female ghost, and means mischief. There goes the light! What the deuce is in the wind now?"

The blazing signal was indeed totally extinguished, and, once more, that bat-like, ominous shadow flitted across the beach—this time coming towards them.

Very possibly, the smuggler was not sorry to make Andrew's ungovernable terror an excuse for flight. He relaxed his grasp, and

Dame Brock's hopeful heir shot along the path, with a swiftness which his crippled condition would, except under the influence of extreme alarm, have rendered impossible.

"What ho, my masters!—whither away so fast?" said a voice coming out of the deep chest of a strong man, who stood right in their way. "You must give the word, if you want to pass me. What, Andrew! my good friend, Dame Brock, must be told if you play truant. What brings you so far this dark night?"

"Your pardon, Master Lance! With my own good will I should be in my bed," said Andrew, whimpering. "'Tis the old woman's malice keeps me out of it. She sent me and Silas to look after the light; and, hang me, if we did not come up just in time to see the foul fiend put it out! You can see yourself if I speak truth."

An opening in the cliff afforded a view of the whole expanse of sand, now dark and solitary, with the long roll of the tide rushing nearer and nearer, as the waves swept in upon the beach. Lance looked down in silent surprise.

"Andrew is right for once," said the smuggler, sullenly. "It was either a wench or an evil spirit that threw down the beacon, and scattered the blazing bits of timber over

the rock. What could any woman, unless it was Dame Brock, care about the light? and we left her safe in her own chimney-corner. Did you set fire to the signal yourself, Master Lance? I'll swear I saw it burning when we were on the brow, but when we came to the gap below the old castle, the sands were as dark as pitch."

"Don't talk any more about it," said Andrew, shuddering. "I'll declare, I should be glad to think it was our old woman. Why, the thing we saw had wings, and no body; and something—it might have been a dog—with long hair, creeping after it. I tell you, it was the French lady and her lap-dog."

"You are an arrant fool as well as a coward, Andrew," said Lance. "The dog, in all probability, was the foreign water-spaniel brought over by Mynheer; and, if Bouffe was her companion, I think I can give a tolerable guess at the lady. You may leave the light to me. It was kindled at sundown, as usual; and I will see that it burns long enough to bring in the boats belonging to the French vessel. Are not those her trim, taper masts in the offing?"

"Aye, aye! that's La Belle Marie, sure enough," said the smuggler. "You've a good eye for a clever craft, Master Lance!—none better, for that matter. 'Tis a pity

you're thinking of giving us the go-by. In these days it's easy to make a fortune, and a man can scarce have a better friend than Mynheer. He owes you a good turn."

"Silence!" said Lance, roughly. "Stand by, and let me pass. Do you and Andrew go back to the village. You see I am at my post."

He went past them, sternly. The men, though they had known him from a boy, felt afraid of him. They both peered over the cliff, however, with returning courage, satisfied that Lance had to bear the brunt of whatever danger might lurk below. In even a less time than might have seemed necessary for the young man to cross the beach, a red light was quivering at the foot of the old watchtower, and shedding a lurid glow on the sands, as well as on the white, foaming waves, which, by this time, were breaking on the steps of the landing-stairs.

Andrew and his companion were so intently watching the beacon, and also a dark spot dancing on the water, that they never heard the cautious tread of a party of Custom-house officers and others advancing along the Lezant pathway. In a trice, the two men were caught hold of, their arms tied behind them, and their outcry stifled.

"Take it quietly, my fine fellows! If

you are honest, no harm will happen to you ; but first we must have the cargo of that boat you are watching. Mynheer seldom comes across the Channel empty-handed."

It was too late for opposition ; and the two prisoners, under charge of a guard, were hurried along after the band of Revenue-service men, who, in company with Morgan Price, their informant concerning the intended run, were on the watch for the landing from the schooner.

CHAPTER XVII.

LANCE FLEMING—the brand of fir-wood still in his hand, with which he had rekindled the light—stood close by the flaring beacon. The torch burned down to his fingers, without his noticing it, till the flame touched his hand. He then threw it impatiently away, and it died out upon the water.

As the waves ran up and broke upon the landing-steps, each came in succession within reach of the bright glow of the signal fire: the old, crumbling machinery, and piles of stone and wood, caught gleams of the flickering lustre; but, elsewhere, the sands and sea were intensely dark. A great change had taken place in the appearance of Lance Fleming, since the night when he had found the nearest approach to sociability and friendship in the Dutchman's cabin; and derived, perhaps, his first idea of domestic comfort and picturesque beauty, from watching the lamplight play on the curious porcelain, rich, quaint carvings, and soft images of womanly

and divine loveliness, presented by the old Flemish and Italian paintings of those fair, pure, holy Marys. The wild, undisciplined youth, ready for any deed of daring mischief—with the stamp of mingled shyness and audacity on his brow—was now a stern, deep-thinking man. Passionate grief, resolute determination, distrust and anger, alternately expressed themselves in his countenance, as the red glare of the signal-flame lighted up his troubled features.

There were questions in those fiery eyes, on those closely-shut lips, which must be answered. His mind was full of longings, dark and unsatisfactory, for revenge. His trust in God and man was shaken. The thirst for vengeance was but the deeper for being slowly roused, and also for its running counter to his earliest and pleasantest associations.

The stifled hail of his comrades on the cliff had not reached his ear. He had been too deeply absorbed in thought to notice it; and, now, all was profoundly silent, except the lash of the waves on the broken landing-steps; and, after a time, the grating of a boat's keel upon the stones. Lance scanned its occupants narrowly; and saw, before the crew tossed up their oars, that it was Mohr who held the tiller.

The phlegmatic Dutchman showed his usual insensibility to danger. He landed alone; and the rowers, pushing off a couple of fathoms' length from the shore, lay-to under the black shadow of the headland. Jacob Mohr grasped Lance's hand, before the young man was aware of his intention.

"Willkommen!" he said; "you have kept good watch. Ah! I did not expect my excellent young pilot to be the first to meet me. Our passage, too, has been a quick one. So much the better, as I had a lady on board, and mean to take Mademoiselle Reine back with me. Is she ready?"

"I do not know," said Lance. "Apparently, she did not desire you to land; for, an hour ago, after I had lighted the signal, the young French girl extinguished it. I believe she acted under Jean Helier's directions. I am not in her secrets, but I cannot blame her, if she thought herself safest on English ground, and refused to take passage in your vessel."

"Ah, that is not good! I do not like hear that Mademoiselle Reine is fickle," said the smuggler. "It is not pleasant for me to have to seek her at Woods. Will you bear to her a message?"

"I must first have a word with you, Mynheer," said Lance. "The place is safe

enough. Let us walk along the sands. There has been no Government vessel here since the Curlew was wrecked; you need be in no fear about your boat."

Mohr followed the youth, without sign of mistrust, though Lance's manner might have inspired it. Above the cliffs, the moon was just rising high enough to shine upon the ruins of the British monarch's castle; but the grand walls of rock on which the fortress stood loomed black and formidable. Not a ray of light fell on the long strand before them, except, now and then, the white flash of a breaker rolling in upon the beach.

"Something has gone wrong with you, my young friend," the skipper said, presently. "I see there is no welcome for me to England in your heart. Speak out! What is the matter? You have a claim upon me for saving my vessel."

"I am glad you acknowledge it," said Lance; "though I desire nothing from you but the truth. I am not sure that I would have lent a hand to save La Belle Marie and her lawless crew from destruction, if I had suspected, that night, as much as I know now."

"Gently!—halte là!" said the foreigner. "My vessel is the jewel of my heart. No one shall speak ill of La Belle Marie in my hearing. You are in a disagreeable humour, mein

freund! It is nothing new to you that men should sail the seas, without asking the King's leave to carry goods, for which many hearts in these wild places will thank them. We sell our wares cheap. You have yourself bought and sold with us free-traders. Why have you turned against us?"

"Because men see and feel differently when, in themselves and their own families, they are sufferers by the crimes to which your traffic leads," Lance answered. "What has my life been hitherto?—a mistake; but it shall be amended. Misgivings became certainties when I found that you and Jean Helier were in close confidence. Such men as he is are the ruin of their associates. What made you, generally so averse to trusting yourself on English ground, seek his intimacy, and engage in smuggling transactions with him? I remember, there was something I could not understand in your determination to face that skulking coward; and, after I slept, you must have had an interview, in which the plans for landing a cargo, consigned to him, were discussed. What is the tie between you? Did Gervase Helier, when you were friends and companions, as I have heard, in exile, confess to you that he bore a part in a dark deed done on these slate-cliffs, at which I once saw you gaze with a deeper meaning in your eyes than I could

fathom? Strange that it never flashed across me before! but crime deadens our perceptions; and I, too, but for an angel's intervention, might have lifted my hand against young St. Erme. *She* saved more than her brother that night."

Lance stopped abruptly, and Mohr also was silent. Right opposite, towered the black rocks which had echoed back the death-cry of the Curlew's devoted crew, as they were borne out by the wild waves to sea, or dashed against the walls of inaccessible precipices. At the same instant, there flowed back upon his soul, with a deeper, tenderer remorse than Lance's hot, impatient spirit could experience, the memory of the pale, half-dead officer—ruined, it might be, in his professional prospects—balked in his well-planned exploit—struggling since childhood under a load of hereditary misfortune, and now disappointed in his manly expectations. It was not the daring, successful smuggler, the good-humoured, free companion, who confronted Lance, but a gloomy, agitated man, with deep marks of sorrow and repentance on his features.

"You are right," he said; "ours is a bad trade. I would give more than I have ever made by it, that, in pursuit of my schooner, the young Lieutenant had not lost his vessel. That was a bad night's work."

Lance looked at him with surprise.

“ Well, you both ran the same chance, and he lost! You would not have had La Belle Marie go upon the rocks, or fall into the hands of Government? But, no matter! I am glad that, in some measure, you see, as I do, that smuggling is a dishonest and mischievous trade. You know better than others the evils it brought upon Gervase Helier. Is he living or dead? I do not believe that Colonel St. Erme, soldier and gentleman as he was, murdered my father. The crime which was committed on the night when the Nautilus ran her cargo ashore, and the French brothers, Jean and Gervase, met at Woods, will yet be traced home to the miscreants by whom I believe it to have been perpetrated. It is not the first time that the smuggler’s hand has been red with blood, either shed in some drunken brawl, or when skulking in darkness, apprehensive of discovery. Was it your knowledge of his guilt that placed my mother’s tyrant in your power?”

A deep sigh burst from Mohr’s lips.

“ Restrain your questions,” he said; “ the time is not yet come for me to answer them. When it arrives—Himmel und Erde!—none will speak quicker than I shall. Gervase Helier was not the man you fancy him. He was in all respects different from that cruel, skulking, unmanly vagabond, with whom you

reproach me for holding intercourse. Gervase was my friend. Many years ago, he helped me to fly from an unjust captivity. We were comrades in such peril and misery as even men cannot face without shrinking. In that attempt to escape, he received a frightful injury. It was for my sake. I have not forgotten it. And this man — my friend — you ask me if he was one likely to commit a brutal crime! — you accuse him of murder! That is hard to bear. I do not say that Colonel St. Erme was guilty — Gott bewahre mich! — I do not accuse any one. Let us leave this matter for the present.”

Lance's dark eyes flashed fire.

“You are too slow for me, Herr Mohr! Your Dutch blood does not ferment so quickly as mine. You cannot leap to a conclusion. It is not for nothing that I have sullied my hands by dealing with the smugglers. I know their secrets; but, hitherto, I have regarded the tales told of their misdeeds with a careless, boyish glee, and have attached to them no gloomier significance. Either you are the devil, or Gervase Helier! Your acquaintance with his past evil career — your pity for his misfortunes — your blindness to his errors — all point to the same solution. It is very evident that I came to the wrong quarter in my search after truth. I must seek it at the hands of the law.”

Mohr's countenance resumed its ordinary expression—his tone its defiant boldness.

“Ah, you will inform against us? You will play your old associates false? So be it, Herr Fleming! I love better an open than a secret foe. I shall not answer one of your questions. I shall leave you to form your own conclusions. If you choose to think that I am Gervase Helier—sehr gut! I might pass for a worse man—I shall not say yes or no. I will not tell you whether he is living or dead. The sooner we part, the better.”

He turned short round to retrace his steps. Lance, however, followed him closely.

“We must, at all events, understand that our positions are altered,” he said. “Others besides myself have identified you as the Captain of the Nautilus—the man known as French Jerry, who angered my father, on the night of his death, by claiming to be the lawful son of Lord Boscawen. I have looked deeply into this matter, in consequence of seeing in family papers, left in a secret hiding-place at the Manor, that the writer undoubtedly believed herself to be a wedded wife. Since this discovery, I have made a journey to Auxerre, where I find that a marriage between Lord Boscawen and Mademoiselle de St. Evremond did occur, forty-eight years ago. I shall not dispute your rights of heirship; but one pri-

vilege I will not resign. If I am not to be the head of my father's family, I am, at all events, his son ; and you, whether as Gervase Helier, the escaped convict, or as successor to a peerage, I hold to be in part, at least, accountable for his death. Either you must answer to me for your share in that night's deed ; or leave my corpse, as his was left, on these sands. We cannot walk side by side as friends and comrades, when a great blood feud is unsettled between us."

He laid his hand on Mohr's arm. The smuggler shook it off roughly.

"Have a care, my friend !" he said. "Suspected murderers—escaped convicts—is there anything more?—are dangerous people to deal with. Steh auf! Leave my arm free."

"If I do, it is only for a time," said Lance. "That unhappy woman, my mother, whose life has been a long penance, has confirmed my impression of your guilt. Her reason is partially warped ; but, on one point, her testimony is strong. My father left the house, to which he never returned alive, in company with the French Brothers."

Mohr listened intently. As Lance proceeded, his brow cleared.

"It is time," he said, "that these dark doubts should end. What does Jean Helier—the poor lady's husband—say?"

“ Helier is almost past saying anything,” answered Lance: “ he is ill—perhaps dying. I do not think he has spoken for several days. He lies on his bed, groaning, haunted by terrible spectres. One of his most fearful visions is that his wife is slowly destroying him. This must be the dream of a madman.”

The click of a gunlock, a shuffling of feet upon the sands, caught Mohr’s attention.

“ Is this a trap, Herr Fleming? have you company to meet me?” he asked angrily, pointing to the Preventive men, drawn up in a line to cut him off from his boat. “ This is what Mademoiselle Reine meant! she did right to warn me.”

“ No, no!—on my soul!—on my honour!—I knew nothing of this,” said Lance, with much agitation. “ Mr. Hearnshaw said not a word to me of any seizure being intended to-night. Let me advise you not to offer resistance. These fellows have probably a warrant for your apprehension. If you are innocent, an English jury will do you justice.”

“ You think so?” said Mohr, with uncontrollable bitterness. “ Pardon me, if I am not as well satisfied as yourself of the excellence of your English trial by jury! We will, if you please, settle this matter after another fashion.”

The smuggler drew a pistol from his bosom,

and fired it in the air. The signal, which was probably a preconcerted one, was answered by the dash of oars, as the boat was pulled rapidly in. Before the Custom-house officers were aware of their danger, a number of foreign sailors, who had lain hidden under the thwarts, jumped ashore; and instead of finding themselves captors of a boat-load of contraband goods, Morgan Price and his confederates were completely at the mercy of a band of French and Dutch seamen, fully armed, and more than double their number.

“There, there! — that will do! No need to be alarmed, gentlemen!” said Mohr. “My vessel does not contain a single prohibited article. You are welcome to search her from stem to stern; I am only sorry that I cannot afford you the pleasure of my company, as I mean to pass part of the night ashore. My boat is quite at your service, provided I find it in readiness for me, two hours hence, at this same spot, on my return from Woods.”

He passed his arm through Lance Fleming's as he spoke, and leaving Price and the Revenue-service men in the hands of the foreign sailors, who were jabbering French and Dutch in their ears, walked slowly, followed by part of his crew, up the pathless ravine. There was a great struggle going on in the young man's mind. He could not

arrive at any satisfactory conclusion. The man beside him, by his well-known character, had from boyhood exercised a great influence over his turbulent passions. At each step, the idea that he was in company with one sullied in earlier life by a deadly crime, lost its hold upon his conviction.

As the moon, which had now risen above the trees of the thicket, shone down clearly upon Mohr's face, Lance felt all his former friendly associations revive. Certainly, that pure pale lustre never fell upon features which, in their kindly, noble expression, bore less mark of the sin of one whose brother's blood cries out against him. By the time they had threaded together the wooded pass which led up from the beach to the old Manor-house, Lance Fleming was walking like a brother by the man whom an hour before he had been determined to hunt to the death; and the smuggling Captain's arm rested confidently, as it had often done before, on the youth's shoulder.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THERE was a light burning in an upper chamber of the house at Woods, where the professional nurse, sent by Mr. Lawrence, was attending vigilantly on her patient. Helier lay, as he had done for several days, in a sullen, speechless apathy. Now and then, he moved his weary limbs and sighed heavily, but he gave no other signs of intelligence.

In a lower room of the same mansion, busy, conflicting interests — more important, it was deemed, at the moment, than the vexed question of Jean Helier's life or death — were at stake. The Doctor had paid a long visit, and it was not yet over, though his long-legged, strong-winded horse had finished his feed of oats and chopped hay, and was getting impatient to be out of the draughty stables, which were sorely deteriorated since the young Lord strove to organise a befitting hunting establishment at the Grange.

His master, in spite of his hard features

and sharp manner, had quick as well as strong feelings. He went back more than once to the parlour, where Mr. Hearnshaw was sitting at a table covered with papers, which he was evidently in no humour for studying. The two men had been friends for years; and, mingled with a very lively regard for his old country neighbour, in the surgeon's mind was a considerable portion of curiosity as to the source of the anxious thoughts to be traced upon the steward's brow, unconnected as they appeared with the dry details of business before him.

Some stir on the floor above had made the Doctor expect a summons, perhaps, to the deathbed of his patient, but it did not come. A large, half-consumed log, falling with a shower of sparks on the hearth, from the brazen dogs which supported it, startled both the occupants of the parlour.

“Well! I think I shall not be wanted again to-night,” said the surgeon, rising. “Mr. Helier holds out longer than I expected. He bore his wife's removal quietly, and it has evidently been a relief. Is there anything I can do for you at Camelford?”

Mr. Hearnshaw looked up from the papers on which his eyes had been vacantly fixed. “Must you go?” he asked. “I was wishing to consult you, if you have no very urgent case

in hand. It may take some little time to make you understand all my troubles."

"Oh, don't hurry yourself," said the Doctor, sitting down again, and picking up the fallen log from the hearth with considerable dexterity. "Just let me get this great limb in its place, and I will listen to you as long as you like. That poor man up-stairs is quite as likely to want me as any of my other patients. There! now we shall have a blaze presently. I am quite at your service."

Mr. Hearnshaw changed his seat, and came round to the side of the fire. The Doctor placed himself opposite. As he did so, he could not help noticing that the active old man, on whom hitherto years seemed to have left few forcible indications of their progress, had altered considerably during the last few weeks. Mr. Hearnshaw spread his hands to the blaze, and let the flame illuminate his features, without troubling himself about what his friend's observations might be.

"Lawrence," he said, at last, "don't think me getting childish; but I have heard to-day what makes an aged man of me at once. My old master is dead — even to you I could not speak of this before. My turn must be coming soon. I hope he was prepared, but it came suddenly at last. Few people will regret Lord Boscawen more than I do."

The surgeon went mentally through the old nobleman's long life in one retrospective glance, and said, drily,—

“I can easily believe it. You have always got on with him better than most people, and hardly any of his family are left. When did this news reach you?”

“Not many hours since,” said the steward. “I was anxious about him after his grandson's death. The account of his bearing up so well did not deceive me. There were a few words in his last letter which made me apprehensive that a blow had been struck such as it was possible he might never rally from; and I was right. He sank immediately. He was never out of doors after the young man's funeral, which, as you may perhaps have heard, was very differently conducted from what was at first proposed. That told me something was wrong; but I never expected that he would give up at the last all the long habits of reserve which had become a kind of second nature to him. I was totally unprepared for the painful discovery which has taken place. Are you sure that a man's word is worth more, when health and strength are leaving him for ever, than when his mind is clear, its force unbroken, his perceptions unclouded? In short, at what estimation do you hold a death-bed confession, when ba-

lanced against the reiterated assertions of a man whom you thought you knew almost as well as yourself?"

Mr. Lawrence eyed him keenly. "That is a difficult question to answer," he said; "but I think I should be more inclined to trust the word of a man like his Lordship, when the world was fading from his view, than while its manifold temptations assailed him. At the last — the only survivor but one of his family — he had little reason for concealing the truth, and every motive for clearing his conscience of the memory of past transgressions."

"Well, he felt it to be right to make atonement for a grievous wrong committed in his youth," said the steward. "I need not go into the story — you have heard it often enough, and at the time I should not have been sorry that poor Madame had her right to bear his name acknowledged. I remember her well formerly, and her few but kind foreign words and gentle grief made an impression on all who came across her. Unfortunately, the evil does not stop there. It is a different thing to be called upon to recognise her son — to have to make up my accounts, and look up to as my employer a man who is probably the last person in the world qualified to act the part of an English

landed proprietor—a half-French, half-Dutch, wholly demoralised smuggler—one with a dozen aliases, each more discreditable than the last! This is what galls me.”

The old man sat looking into the fire, with his eyes full of tears. Accustomed to look upon the absent nobleman of whom he was the efficient representative, with a degree of respect which Lord Boscawen, in his life-long career, had done little to merit, he grieved sincerely for his loss; while the prospect of giving up his charge was intensely mortifying. Mr. Lawrence, though he did not share his reverence for the deceased nobleman, understood and pitied him.

“It is a hard case,” he said; “that is, if I rightly comprehend its bearings; and I can generally keep the separate threads of a story tolerably distinct, without letting them slip. The foreign lady’s son by her marriage with Lord Boscawen is, or has been called, Gervase Helier—one of the noted French Brothers—still better known as Jacob Mohr, Captain of La Belle Marie?”

The steward clasped his hands together as they rested on his knee, and assented disconsolately,—

“A pretty fellow to have to acknowledge as the owner of this fine property! Why, we shall never make him understand business.

The county will not condescend to receive him as Lord Boscawen. It is to be hoped he will reside abroad. And there is yet a darker side to the affair; it is only the lightest part of my difficulties that I have laid before you."

The Doctor's eyes twinkled. Notwithstanding his really kind heart and regard for his old friend, he could not help being somewhat amused at his distress.

"The worst part, I should imagine," he said, presently, with a graver expression, "is the disappointment of young Fleming, who has just been brought forward as his Lordship's heir. This is enough to sour him for life. Many a young man has been ruined by such a complete downfall."

"Yes! it is hard upon him," certainly, said Mr. Hearnshaw, with indifference; "but that is a minor point. He has been nothing better than a rustic till within the last few months, and can easily find his way back into his obscurity. Just now, he is likely to make himself most impertinently obtrusive. That tiresome meddler, Morgan Price, who has opened a new inn at Lezant, and taken the liberty to put up my Lord's arms for a sign, is, as you know, at war with the smugglers, who mostly frequent the old inn. I was weak enough to promise him my assistance in

capturing a party of them; and should Mynheer unluckily fall into the trap which the Custom-house people have laid for him, young Fleming will be sure to bring forward, against his late ally, the accusation of having been concerned, as Gervase Helier, in his father's murder. Now, though I have quite come round to your opinion that Jean, not Gervase, was the real culprit, and doubt not to obtain decisive proof of his guilt, it is disagreeable enough to think that I shall probably make acquaintance with the new Lord Boscawen when he is taken into custody on one or other of these odious charges."

Again a light shone in the Doctor's eyes, which showed that the seriousness of the position did not deaden his sense of humour.

"Ah! you see it now?" he said. "I thought it would come home to you, sooner or later. But what is to be done? That hardened sinner up-stairs is quite obdurate. He will die game at last. It will not this time, I fear, be a case of even death-bed repentance and atonement."

The steward was silent, and for some minutes both remained lost in thought. In spite of the Doctor's efforts to keep the logs in a blaze, the fire had burned low on the hearth. At last, Mr. Lawrence spoke sharply, and with some abruptness,—

“ Are you satisfied that, if you find this Gervase Helier, he can prove his claim to be the French lady’s son? The people among whom she took refuge—do you know anything about them? I remember, when you spoke to me on this subject some time ago, you told me that Lord Boscawen was alive to the danger of a fraudulent attempt being made to palm upon him a fictitious heir. Did he, at the last, admit that he had a son as well as a wife behind the scenes? Have you taken into account the temptation such an inheritance would hold out to a needy or designing foreigner? ”

“ That was the view I took of the matter, when I received his Lordship’s instructions, some months ago, to make inquiry after Gervase Helier. But I am not sure that I correctly understood his meaning, even at that period,” said the steward, uneasily. “ My Lord was often inscrutable—his prejudices difficult to be accounted for. I have repeatedly suggested doing something for young Fleming, but never could prevail even so far as to get for him a proper education. He would drink himself to death, as his father had nearly done, Lord Boscawen always said; and, very possibly, his dislike of Lance as his successor reconciled him to the idea of doing justice to his son by his private

marriage with the French lady. It is a remarkable coincidence, that, on the last occasion when I dined with Captain Fleming in this house, after we had gone over the accounts — which, as usual, were in a very unsatisfactory condition — he conversed with me on this identical subject, asking me to look over some curious family papers he had found in a cabinet. It was a sort of diary kept by Madame.”

“ Indeed ! ” said the surgeon, with curiosity. “ Did you examine it together ? Had its contents any decided bearing upon the point we are discussing ? ”

“ Well, in one sense they might certainly be said to bear upon it,” said the steward, hesitatingly. “ But the female mind is one-sided. What ladies wish, they are apt to take for granted. That was Captain Fleming’s way of regarding the matter. He never believed a syllable about my Lord’s French wife ; and held, in short, all the unflattering ideas which military and naval men especially entertained, in those days, about our neighbours over the water. Madame, in spite of her delicate way of writing, was a woman of light character, in his opinion. Her word went for nothing. As for her family, and their strong protest against her injuries, they were Papists and liars.”

“ Oh, there was a protest ! ” said the Doctor. “ Then Madame Fleming was a woman of good parentage ? I always thought it extraordinary that she had no friends to take her part, except these smuggling Breton traders. ”

“ Her brother wrote a very strong appeal in her favour, which must have fallen into Madame’s hands, since it was among the papers she left behind at her departure, ” answered the steward. “ She was a Saint Evremond, one of a decayed, noble family, most of whom were victims, afterwards, of the Revolution. But to return to the documents. After serious consideration, Captain Fleming and I agreed to put them back where he found them, and it is my firm belief that neither of us ever mentioned the subject to any living soul. On one occasion, Gervase Helier’s claim having been again mooted, I intended to look for the packet, but I was interrupted. That cowardly fellow, Jean Helier, was with me, and protested he had seen a ghost. ”

“ More unlikely things have happened than that those papers still lie hidden in the old cabinet, ” said the surgeon, eagerly. “ Though not affording anything like legal proof of the kind required, they may contain information, concerning dates and places,

most necessary and valuable at the present time. I am quite a sceptic respecting ghosts, and have not the least objection to accompany you, at this moment, to search for the packet."

Mr. Hearnshaw rose with alacrity. "This is exactly what I wanted, Lawrence. A person like you to share a responsibility which, I warn you, may be somewhat onerous. After what I have told you, I need hardly say that these papers reflect strongly on the late Lord's character. Their publication, during his lifetime, would certainly have been in the highest degree undesirable. Such was the view taken by his relation, Captain Fleming, when he replaced them. I agree with you, that the best thing we can do, in the present dilemma, is to go and see if they are still in existence."

Taking one of the candles from off the table, Mr. Hearnshaw led the way; and the Doctor, full of curiosity, and perfectly certain, from his companion's manner, that the concealed papers were of importance; followed him along the tortuous passages of the old house. There were still extant marks of the great fire from which the lady fled in terror. Her apartment was the one now designated as the haunted chamber, which no person had entered since Lance and Reine found it deserted by Mary and her brother. The

hearth was unswept, and covered with charred logs, half-consumed; the couch, where Richard St. Erme had lain, was not made smooth; the coverlet thrown upon the ground, and Mary's open Bible on the table. All around were tokens of a hurried flight.

“ I declare, Madame might have gone off yesterday,” said the surgeon, looking about him. “ I half expect to hear a whistle—the smuggler's signal. This is a very curious apartment.”

He walked across the room, eyeing the ancient furniture with an interest heightened by the steward's recent disclosures. Meanwhile, Mr. Hearnshaw examined the wainscot, and having found the knob hidden among the carving, pushed back the panel, and a rush of cold air was admitted from the dressing-closet.

“ Take care of your candle, Lawrence,” said the steward. “ We shall want all the light that can be thrown into these recesses. You can look at the old pictures presently. Come and help me to seek for Madame's journal and letters.”

For some time, they were both engaged in an active search for the papers, which had passed from Lance's hands into those of the young French lady, that she might translate part of them for him. They were, of course,

not forthcoming now. Every cavity of the bureau, and even Madame's large pockets, were examined unscrupulously. The thick damasks, hanging against the wall, rustled mournfully, and the soft velvets were clammy to their impatient fingers; but no successful result rewarded them.

"It is of no use," said the steward. "Some one has been before us — Lance, perhaps; he is most interested in this matter. Let us go into his room. It is possible he may be there."

The passage had a door belonging to the youth's chamber, at which Mr. Hearnshaw knocked; and receiving no answer, pushed it open. All within was solitary; but before the steward could resolve, or his friend give counsel as to the measures which, under existing circumstances, it would be proper to pursue, a sound coming from the room they had lately quitted made the two men, stout-hearted as they both were, stand still, in something like alarm, and listen.

An even, firmly-planted step, was plainly heard, walking from end to end of the ghost-chamber, from which they were only separated by the lady's dressing-closet. Mr. Hearnshaw made a sign to the surgeon to be quiet; and with cautious tread, differing widely from that of the person in the haunted

room, the steward and the Doctor, leaving the light behind them, stole noiselessly back across the passage, and applied their eyes and ears to the most available chinks and crevices of the secret entrance.

A man, dressed like a sailor, and attended by a dark-brown retriever, was in possession of the apartment where, according to tradition and popular belief, so many strange, supernatural appearances, had at different times been witnessed. The moon, at its full, shone in through the uncurtained windows, and almost the whole of the chamber was as light as though it had been day.

The dog, after gambolling about joyfully, obeyed a signal given by the stranger, who opened the door for him, and ran out along the passage. The person remaining behind then desisted from his regular, quarter-deck walk, and stood contemplating the picture of the Madonna which hung over the mantel-piece.

Mr. Hearnshaw and the surgeon, neither of them superstitious characters, looked with surprise at the tall, strongly-knit figure of the individual who had thus suddenly and furtively intruded himself into the house. In a few minutes, the rush of the spaniel, running backwards and forwards, might be heard; then the rustle of a silk dress, and Reine

Helier, in a dark travelling garb, but bare-headed, entered the apartment.

“ Captain Mohr ! ” she said, breathlessly, “ it is not my fault. I did all I could to prevent your landing. Ah, you are not aware of your danger ! You must go away this very instant ! ”

“ Nimmermehr ! ” said the smuggler, calmly. “ At least, not without you, Mademoiselle. Do not be under any apprehension. Half the crew of La Belle Marie are below, keeping guard over their Captain. They will blow up this old house, sooner than let me be kept from them. Are you ready ? ”

“ No, no ! I cannot accompany you, ” said Reine, while tears sprang to her eyes. “ Not now—not to-night—I have given up the thought. Perhaps, it was wicked ever to admit it. My poor cousin is dying—his wife has been removed to a distance. Ah, he has no friends—a foreigner, and hardly a single being except servants, near him—only myself ! Indeed, indeed, I cannot to-night go with you. ”

The young French girl, disappointed to the heart's core, and frightened by the dark frown on Mohr's brow, burst into tears.

“ Sehr wohl ! That will do. Why do you cry ? I am not going to take you away by force from these pleasant chambers, ” the

seaman answered. "It is true, there is your lover—well, I suppose he must wait; but do not try him too long! He does not look very patient. Is this cousin of yours, Mr. Helier, so very ill? That is bad. Can I see him? We have a little account to settle. Show me his sick-room."

"Indeed, I think it might be better you should meet," said Reine. "He is dreadfully anxious about you. It was he who sent me to extinguish the light. Ah, he has been very ill since I came back, and told him that, though I had followed his directions, when I looked down from the cliffs, the signal was again burning! Ever since, he has been almost distracted."

"Ah, that is good! that is like a friend!" said Mohr, ironically. "Eh bien, Mademoiselle! I should like to thank our dear Monsieur Helier for all his kindness. It is possible that I may yet persuade him to let you go with me. I do not like to be balked of my purpose. I think you are too good, too pure, to be left to nurse this man, when his own wife forsakes him. Where is she gone?"

Reine's tears continued to flow.

"Indeed, I cannot tell you," she replied. "All I know is that she is gone, and I am alone with the poor children and their father."

He values my services more than they deserve, and will not consent to part from me. I have not the heart to leave him. Ah, I think you, too, should have some pity! Is it not your wish to see him once more before he dies?"

"Yes!" said Mohr. "That is above everything necessary. Have the goodness, Mademoiselle, to show me the way."

Reine could not understand the immovable rigidity of his features. She said no more, but left the room, accompanied by the seaman; while Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Hearnshaw, in some confusion at their involuntary eavesdropping, emerged from their dusty place of concealment.

"So, that is Jacob Mohr!" said the Doctor. "It is something unusual that a man does not disappoint you, whom you have for years had a curiosity to see. I do not know whether he will prove to be Lord Boscawen, but he is undoubtedly a very remarkable-looking person. I wonder what he is going to do with my patient? Have you any more convenient dressing-closets in this old house? I would give a good deal to know what is passing in Helier's room."

"Oh! no need for concealment," replied the steward. "Either this man is or is not Gervase Helier. No one can certify his iden-

tity better than Jean, who was foster-brother of the French lady's son. Here is the opportunity for which I was waiting. The French Brothers, if our suspicion be correct, are together. Should this man prove to be only Jacob Mohr the smuggler, the whole case falls to the ground. Let us go at once, and see how the matter stands."

Without farther debate, after shaking off the cobwebs which had fallen upon their coats, Mr. Hearnshaw and the Doctor quitted the haunted room, and followed Reine Helier and the smuggler.

CHAPTER XIX.

FOR the first time during many days and nights, since his illness had assumed a serious aspect, Jean Helier woke from a troubled sleep, and found himself quite alone. His dread of solitude was so great, that it overpowered even the dogged sullenness of his nature. He would have been glad of the sight of friend or foe— of any human presence which might scare away the dreamy horrors wherewith he was beset.

He heard at a distance the murmur of voices, from a room where Leah and the nurse were gossiping together, over the probability of his not outlasting the next turn of the tide. Their words did not reach him, but there was something exasperating in the dismal flow of their ceaseless talk; a sort of eager, yet suppressed, succession of question and answer, which excited his feeble, overstrung nerves almost to frenzy. He tried to call either of the women; but his lips were so parched, and his exhaustion so complete, that

he could not give utterance to a single word, nor reach the cup of water on the table.

After an interval which seemed interminable—though both housekeeper and nurse, if put upon oath, would have denied being absent even so long as five minutes from his chamber—Helier heard a little pattering sound, like mice behind the wainscot. It came, and ceased, and then went on again; stopping, if he moved his arm impatiently. After a little while, the intruder grew bolder; and then he distinguished a small footstep, and heard the rattle of a spoon in a saucer, which he had been longing to reach, containing some jelly Reine had made for him. As with an effort he raised his head, there was a rush and a flitting; and nothing was to be seen, when he looked out of bed, but the empty saucer, and the spoon lying on the floor. Apparently, there was no one in the chamber but himself. A dark thought crossed his mind, as he looked at the door leading into his wife's room; but the heavy nightbolt was dropped, and he felt satisfied that, even in his sleep, he should have heard it lifted. No one could have entered that way, without disturbing him.

Again, all was quiet. The women's chatter had at last ceased; and he had almost dozed off to sleep, when the little pattering

tread, coming once more across the bare oak flooring, roused him up in terror. Was it the French lady's child, that sometimes, in the shadowy traditions belonging to the place, passed over the boards, with its slender ankles and feet lacerated and bleeding? He listened in breathless affright; still, something familiar in the click of the small sabots reassured him; and contriving to peep through an opening in the curtain, he saw that it was one of his own mischievous girls, who was creeping about the room on tiptoe.

“Come here! Zélie, mon enfant!” the unhappy sufferer gasped out, in such hoarse tones, that the little girl failed to recognise his voice. She did not move an inch nearer; but stood still, with her restless glance wandering furtively hither and thither.

Helier clutched at the coverings of the couch, and tried to raise himself. The child, afraid of some aggressive proceeding on the part of one who was the object of constant terror, began to cry.

“Ah! cessez; tais-toi!—viens ici; je n'en puis plus!” he exclaimed, sinking back with a groan, while Zélie, stopping her tears, stared wonderingly at the great, gaunt, helpless spectre; powerless to injure, and incapable, from long habits of harsh usage, of

inspiring her feeble mind with one tender thought.

“C'est ça!” she said, at last, coming very slowly nearer, step by step, and gazing at him with a strange curiosity. “Lie still! Won't you be quiet? Leah says, you must soon. When the water begins to go down, you will die.”

Helier looked at her in horror. “Who told you that lie? child, imp! Que fais-tu ici? Where are Reine — Leah — the nurse? Send some one to me!”

“Ah! you want them now?” said the child, shaking her head; “but they won't come; and you are so sick, you can't make them! You can't beat me and Victoire if you want it ever so. Ah, ah! si malin que vous êtes, you can do us no harm?”

She clapped her hands exultingly, and ran farther off, as if still some dread of her terrible parent mingled with her new-found audacity.

Helier's howl of baffled fury caught the ear of the nurse, who was coming along the passage. She called Leah, believing that his latest hour had struck, and not wishing to face its horrors alone. The two women entered together.

The wretched man was trembling with

agony. Zélie, frightened at his rage, had run away through the same side-door by which she had slipped in.

“Where is the Doctor? Ah, scélérat! I wish I had strength to strangle him! Why did he tell me I had a chance, if Phœbe were taken out of the way, since this is to be the end of it all? Leah! how dare you—how dares this woman—say that I am dying?”

“Ah, poor soul! he feels his weakness now!” said the nurse, compassionately. “For my part, I think it wrong and cruel to deceive him.” She busied herself with the food she was preparing for him, and said no more.

Helier’s face became of a ghastly whiteness. “Where is my Lord’s steward?” he said. “Give me some cordial! Ah, ces enfans! Est-il possible que je meure? Do children always speak truth? Leah! you have known me a long time: what is it you say?”

The housekeeper came to the bedside, and looked with an experienced glance at her trembling master. The nurse did not put herself forward. She had thought ill of the case for some time, but as her opinion was not asked, she considered that it did not behove her to speak.

“Eh bien?” said Helier. “Is it death

that I feel creeping over me? Speak, Leah! Do I see the truth in your face?"

"I am afraid, Sir, that you are much worse than you were when the Doctor last saw you?" answered Leah. "That mischievous child has given you a fright which you are ill able to bear. Shall I tell Mr. Lawrence to step up? I scarcely think he has left the house. Mr. Hearnshaw wished him to sleep here."

"Yes, yes! Let him come at once. But first give me the mixture the surgeon left, to be taken if I grew suddenly worse. That may put fresh life into me. Ah, it was, perhaps only a shock! That little undutiful girl terrified me. There, give me my medicine."

He swallowed the draught eagerly, and tried to compose himself; but the confusion in his brain seemed to increase. He lay tossing and groaning, and Reine, as she opened the door, heard the voice, which of late had been silenced by weakness, raised in tones of feverish alarm. The nurse stood by his bedside, trying to pacify him. She did not own that her patient had been left in solitude, nor that any person save herself and Leah could have approached him. "Poor soul! he must have been dreaming," she said. "He scarcely knows what is really before his eyes, or only in his troubled fancy."

“Are you sure the mistress is gone?” demanded Helier, fixing his look suspiciously upon the woman. “I believe she has been here, and that I am more ill in consequence. Reine! did no one come in with you? Are you quite alone?”

His cousin hesitated. Helier noticed that she shrank from answering him. With his own trembling hand he put back the curtain, and saw dimly in the doorway the tall form of the smuggler.

“Qu'est-ce que c'est? Voilà un autre! Am I always to be tormented?” he exclaimed, hoarsely, while a damp, cold moisture stood on his pallid brow. “Can neither of you see it?—there, by the door! Will you not say a prayer; do anything to chase it away?”

He gasped for breath. “It is no spectre, Cousin Jean,” said Reine, compassionately. “See! it is a living man—your friend, the Dutch skipper, whom you sent me to warn. Herr Mohr has his brave French sailors with him, and says he is in no danger. He knows we did our best for him, though we did not succeed; and he is come to see you in all kindness, and wish you better health for the future.”

Helier turned his face to the wall. “I do not desire,” he said, gloomily, “to hold conversation with any one. I am not equal to it. Tell him to go away.”

“Indeed, he is very ill!” said Reine; motioning back Mohr, who had advanced into the room. “I do not think he quite knows who is near him, or what we are saying. Mon cousin!” she continued, seeing that Mohr was about to speak, and fearing the effect of his voice upon the invalid—“would you not like to see the friend of Gervase Helier? He can, perhaps, tell you what you desire to know respecting one who was, I am sure, very dear to you.”

“No, no!” replied Helier, impatiently. “This man is no friend of mine, or of poor Gervase. I do not believe he ever knew him. Let me die in peace!”

“Ah, it is not yet come to that, I think!” said the smuggler, as he stood by the bed, looking down on the shrinking form, which seemed as if it would have crept into the wall, to elude his gaze. “You do not look ready to die, and must rouse yourself, my good friend. I think you can listen, and at present I will not trouble you to speak. It is I who have to render to you an account of your last commission.”

Helier groaned. “Assez, assez!” he said. “I do not wish to hear more about it. You mistook my meaning altogether.”

“No, no! that I cannot admit!” said Mohr. “I am a man of my word. I do what I promise; neither less nor more. Der

Herr Lieutenant—well! I took him over to la belle Bretagne—Mademoiselle's province. There was no harm in that! I did not throw him overboard, or do him any sort of mischief; that was not in the bargain. Ah, he is safe and well! Mademoiselle will make no complaint of my care of her friend, when they are once more together. We were bons camarades, the young officer and I! We often talked together. If your pain is not too violent, I should like to repeat to you some things that were said. Mademoiselle, I will engage, is not unwilling to listen."

Helier looked up at him inquiringly. His eyes met Mohr's searching glance, and he shuddered violently.

"Ah! these pains—ces douleurs mortelles! Mon Dieu! is there no respite for me? Vite! go!" he said, calling to the nurse, who was standing by the fire. Tell the surgeon to come to me! I hope he has not left the house. Let him know that I am dying."

The woman obeyed his orders at once: she was frightened at his ghastly appearance. Mohr, however, looked at him calmly.

"Courage, mon ami!" he said. "You will not die yet. There is time for me to finish what I was saying. This young man—Mademoiselle Reine's fiancé—ah! I could have wished her a better parti! He is poor,

very poor, and proud; which are bad things to go together. It would be a good deed, were it your only one, if at the last you could make this good girl, who has waited upon you like an angel, happy with her lover."

The sick man's faculties, rendered obtuse, perhaps, by illness, on points where self was less immediately concerned, failed to comprehend his meaning. "What is this?" said Helier. "Reine, did you tell him to work upon me to let you go? Women are all false—all cruel!"

"No!" said Mohr, quickly and sternly. "It was another person bade me probe your feelings. Years ago—it matters not exactly how long—where, or when—I stood by the death-bed of one who in early life was connected with you. You and he were close friends, once; but I was the last he had. This man—Gervase Helier—told me, if I came to England, to seek you out. He feared that, when you lay upon your bed of death, as he did then, it would go hard with you if a false accusation lay on your conscience. See, how true his words were! It is guilt, more than pain, that brings you so low; and if you were, by one brave effort, to clear your conscience, I believe, on my soul, death would lose half its terrors! This woman, for whom you paid so dear a price, has not rewarded you. My

friend, it is always thus. The prize we covet has lost its value, when we have crossed that deep ditch which yawns between a bad deed and the thoughts out of which it sprang. She was never worth the penalty you paid; and now she has betrayed and forsaken you. But for all that, you committed murder for her sake!”

Helier shivered, but he appeared unable to speak, or even to call upon the surgeon for aid, as he stood near the door. Mr. Lawrence was listening with intense curiosity to the smuggler, and did not seem disposed to interrupt him. Jacob Mohr took no notice of his entrance, though his quick glance passed over his figure, and that of the steward, who had followed him in.

“Gervase Helier,” Mohr went on, “knowing you better than any other man, believed you to be guilty of the murder of Captain Fleming, your employer. He knew you to be a man of unbridled passions; and, on the day of your master’s death, there had been a quarrel between you: you were to be shortly dismissed. This, he heard from your own lips, an hour before his brig weighed anchor. Now that your last hour is drawing near, would it not be better to clear your soul of the black load that must have weighed upon it, since Colonel St. Erme incurred the punish-

ment due to your crime? Speak, Mademoiselle! Pray to him! pray for him! Let him hear, in holier words than mine, that there is forgiveness for the darkest sin, if it be repented of, and restitution made to the wronged. I have heard you pray when the wild waters surged, on rough nights, against the sides of my little vessel. It has brought to my mind, when I heard your soft voice, many things which were wrong in my past life; but none, I thank my heavenly Father, like this! I am pleading for you—for Richard—for that still more unhappy man, the convict who either died without a name, and was buried in a felon's grave, or wanders still, in dread and terror of recapture. Reine, will you not, for your own sake—for his children's, join your prayers to mine?"

The young girl sank on her knees, but her voice was quenched in tears. Helier turned his eyes helplessly towards the surgeon, who, at this mute appeal from his patient, stepped forward, and laid his finger on his pulse.

"Ah, you give me up?" said Helier, after watching his grave countenance. "You mean that death is near at hand? You can, with all your skill, do nothing to save me? Is there, indeed, no hope?"

"None, humanly speaking," said the surgeon. "Your own sensations tell you that

you are sinking fast. If you have any final dispositions to make—any word of comfort or forgiveness for absent friends or enemies to deliver, it will be well to lose no time. Would you wish to see a Minister of the Gospel?”

“No, no!—not him!—not *his* brother!” said Helier. “My Lord’s steward will read a prayer for me presently; but, first, I must speak. I know what you are waiting for. Eh bien; you shall have it. Messieurs! it was I who shot Captain Fleming; and the woman, Phœbe Helier, is accountable for the deed. I swore to have her for my wife, and she jilted me to marry the young cavalry officer. I saw him often ill-treat her:—he drank like a madman:—in time, he would have drunk himself into the grave. I wish I had let him! but it was too slow. I was jealous, in short—and when he threatened to turn me off, I resolved that he should go first.

“I had no plan; but, on the night when my foster-brother came to this house, to seek for the proofs of his birthright, I saw Fleming, after Gervase was gone, standing on the cliff, to watch the brig weigh anchor, and the thought came into my mind, that Phœbe would be mine if we were free from him. Then Colonel St. Erme went by in the moonlight, and the same evil spirit told me he would be supposed to have done it,

since the Captain and he were on the worst of terms.

“It all passed as I would have had it. For years no one thought of me. Ah! it seemed to have gone by. I alone suffered. Mon Dieu! what have I not gone through?”

He spoke with difficulty, in short, interjectional gasps. When his eyes met the anxious, inquiring gaze of those present, they were lit up by a fierce, expiring glare:

“People began to talk about the ghosts. I believe Lance’s folly revived the old tales of the place being haunted. The smugglers hid their goods in the offices, and sought to frighten away intruders. Others must have seen something, but I could not stir without being confronted by forms that made my flesh creep. Fleming’s spectre sat at the table with me — the rustle of the Frenchwoman’s robes, her shriek as she fled from the burning house, had grown familiar; but another set of phantoms, after a time, peopled the walks, peeped at me from the dark old closets, brushed past me on the stairs. I do not know whether some of them were real — perhaps they are about me now. My eyes are dim. Is it Gervase Helier near me, or do I see him who carried away the pale young officer, wrapped in his winding-sheet? Where are the papers of Madame, which Mr. Hearnshaw came to look

for? Are her children provided for? Phœbe, my wife, has she left me alone to die?

“ Allez — laissez-moi ! — I wish I had not spoken ! Even my own children, my wife, conspired against me. La vie, la mort, — ah, I know not which is the most terrible. Prayer will not aid me. It is too late ! Yet I have said all you can desire. Will it not win some ease for me in this world or the next — some respite from this horrible malady ? ”

He turned over in his bed, and lay gloomily silent, while Mr. Lawrence ordered such applications as might alleviate his agony. The women attended upon him kindly, and, lulled by opiates, he dozed off into a brief slumber, from which he awakened to the full conviction that life was departing. His confession then appeared to afford him, in recollection, some small degree of comfort ; and the Christian ministration of a clergyman, sent for previously by Mr. Hearnshaw from a parish some miles distant, gave to the unhappy man, in his last moments, whatever hope and consolation a religion full of mercy could bestow.

CHAPTER XX.

JACOB MOHR drew Reine gently out of the sick-room, which was left to the occupation of the dying man and those in charitable attendance on him. The steward opened the door of a large empty saloon, into which he invited the others to enter.

“ Captain Mohr,” he said, courteously, “ from some words which I heard you utter a few moments ago, it appears that you are the person most likely to be able to satisfy us on a point which is, at this moment, of paramount importance. Is the man, Gervase Helier, really dead? If living, can you help us to trace him? I know that, for many years, he has had strong motives for keeping out of sight, which, it is possible, need no longer influence him. My late friend and master, Lord Boscawen, has acknowledged, on his deathbed, a marriage with Mademoiselle de St. Evremond, prior to that of which we were all cognisant. I am sorry that you should

have taken the law into your own hands with regard to the manner in which you have introduced yourself into this house, where, as I have ascertained, your smuggling friends have us all at their mercy. It is not the reception I would have wished to afford you, if my present impressions are correct. Pardon me, if I am somewhat incoherent, but I am an old man, and I confess the turn matters have taken has quite bewildered me. Ah, I can remember his Lordship's coming here, when he was a handsome youth, and all the tenantry were marshalled in order to receive him! Who could have expected that I should live to see such changes?"

The old steward paused, much affected. Mr. Lawrence, who understood the cause of his agitation better than any one else present, said, quickly,—

“The fact is, Captain Mohr, it is essential just now to ascertain all that can be known of Gervase Helier. Will you give us your assistance?"

Mohr answered briefly,—

“Gentlemen, all I know of Gervase Helier has been told. He did not survive his hard captivity. Lord Boscawen's tardy repentance came too late to serve him. I have only brought my men to this house to prevent what might otherwise have happened—an infringe-

ment of my liberty. Mademoiselle Reine, I have only one more errand to perform in this country, and then I am ready to take you to the home your future husband has prepared. Will you trust me sufficiently to bear me company to Brittany?"

Reine put her soft hand in Mohr's. "I am satisfied," she said. "Take me away from this house!"

"Do not decide for yourself rashly, Mademoiselle Reine," Mr. Hearnshaw said, gravely. "Your prospects have lately undergone a considerable alteration, my Lord having amply provided for you by will, as his grandchild. I will take care to procure for you a safe and honourable asylum, in case it should be your pleasure not to accompany this gentleman. If I am not mistaken, you are of age, and consequently your own mistress. Meanwhile, Captain Mohr, should we have to call upon you for further information, in what part of the world are we to look for you?"

"Richard St. Erme and Lance Fleming will both know where to find me," answered the smuggler. "Mademoiselle Reine, there is a person whom I must see, for perhaps the last time, before I leave England. If I do not come for you myself, your cousin, Lord Boscawen, shall be your protector till you are on board my vessel, or even longer, if you

think it necessary. It will not be the first time Lance has piloted La Belle Marie off Tintagel."

His prompt recognition of young Fleming's claim had an effect upon all present, which was not lessened by the chivalrous bearing of the skipper as he took leave of Reine.

"Upon my word, that man looks like a peer of the realm! I am by no means sure that you have made a good exchange," said the surgeon, as he reluctantly prepared to pay another visit to his patient.

"Mademoiselle! if we do not meet again, I wish you every good thing life can afford, and I dare say you will attain it. I think you are the very best physiognomist with whom I am acquainted. Here is the finest fellow I ever saw in my life, and you first recognised his merits. As for Richard St. Erme, I was struck with his excellent expression the instant I saw him on the top of the Exeter coach. The only mistake you have made is in the kindness you have lavished on that miscreant above-stairs."

The foreign sailors, acting under directions from their Captain, transmitted to them through Lance Fleming, had brought their prisoners up to the old house in the woods, and lodged them in the out-offices for security. At present, the Revenue-service men and their

captors were assembled round a fire kindled in the old laundry, partaking of the good cheer which Leah, by her young master's order, had set before them.

Lance did not choose to enter the house. He and Morgan Price were standing outside in the moonlight, but not speaking to each other, when Mohr came forth.

The honest landlord of the Boscawen Arms went straight up to him. Already the report of a wonderful alteration in the fortunes of the smuggler had got wind, but the manner of the Welshman, though respectful, was not obsequious.

“ From all I can hear, my Lord,” he said, “ there seems to have been a mistake made, for which I and others must ask your pardon. If you are what your men seem to think, as far as I can make out their gibberish, you will not bear malice against those who have acted in accordance with what they believed to be their duty. For my own part, I scarcely know what to say, as I appear only to be a meddler ; but the fact is, Lieutenant St. Erme has put up at our house, and made us all love him. Would it be taking too great a liberty if I were to ask your honour what is become of him ? ”

“ Not at all,” answered Mohr, good-humouredly. “ You are heartily welcome,

Herr Price, to all the information on this subject which you can reasonably desire. Der Herr Lieutenant is recovering fast. His sea-voyage did him nothing but good, and he was tempted to repeat the dose. Having taken a passage home in my vessel, he is in London, making his report to his employers—that is, to your Admiralty officers—respecting the loss of his vessel. When that is done, he will return—I think it will not be long first—to Brittany, where he is about to be married to the jeune demoiselle who did me the honour to come over with me to England last spring, and liked her cabin so well that she is ready now to make another trip with me.”

“ All right, Captain ! ” said Price, touching his cap. “ I durst not go back to my missus and the children without being able to let them know something satisfactory about the Lieutenant. Will you be good enough to tell him, with our respectful duty, that we wish him every happiness ? ”

Mohr assented cheerfully. If he had noticed the title bestowed upon him by the young publican, he did not take the trouble to undecieve him, knowing that the truth would soon come to light.

Lance's countenance showed the reverse of exultation, as he strode up and down the court-yard. None of the gossip around him

had reached his closed ears—not a ray of cheerfulness had penetrated into the dark night of his thoughts. Nevertheless, he smiled faintly as Mohr passed his hand through his arm, and led him to a little distance.

“Cheer up!” he said. “My boy, you have a fair future opening before you. Let the past be forgotten. I am not Gervase Helier: neither am I Lord Boscawen. See how the fools, who would willingly have carried me off to prison, touch their caps to me! But it is all nonsense. It is your turn now. Mein Kind! the world will have a different face when you are master here, and have title and fortune. The French lady’s son is dead—peace be to his ashes! They lie where I helped to place them, in a far-off land, where we—this poor Gervase and I—once went through great hardship together. He did not outlive his misery—that is hard! Still, he is at rest. He committed no crime for which he did not, by sincere repentance, atone. He is now happy; and you, for whom, hitherto, life has had few pleasures—you are now, undoubtedly, Lord Boscawen—the owner of yonder old mansion, which I do not advise you to inhabit, and many a goodly farm and cottage in this glorious Old England.”

Lance looked with a shudder at the light

visible overhead, burning in the sick man's chamber.

“ Captain Mohr,” he answered, “ your friendship is worth more to me than all which you tell me within the last few minutes has been conceded. I am glad that you are not the ruffian for whom I unwisely took you. These two things please me: for I loved and trusted you, and you returned my affection, when no one in the wide world cared a straw for me—not even my own mother. What am I to do now?—give me aid and counsel! Friends, save yourself, I have none; and I cannot trust those who will try to persuade me I am fit for the enjoyment of rank and wealth, now that I have so suddenly risen above my old, ill-chosen associates and unfortunate connexions.”

“ Ah! you must shake off these morbid feelings,” said Mohr. “ I have seen all along that you were made for better things. Ja! I will not admit, since I have pursued it so long, that because we carry contraband goods our trade is utterly degrading; nevertheless, I would not have you continue such traffic. I shall, myself, wash my hands of it for ever, and we will both learn to be good, honest citizens, and obedient to the laws. I have been outside them for a long time; but for us all there comes, sooner or later, a change.

For you, this has fallen in good time: you are not a serious defaulter. There is no great harm done. If a vessel be dismasted in a gale, or mistake her bearings and drift upon these pitiless rocks, there will be one more firm hand, one more brave heart, one pair more of watchful eyes to help her, and save her crew in the moment of danger. Most of us do some wild deeds in youth. When the foundation is good, we learn to turn our worst frolics to advantage for ourselves and others; if bad, we follow the impulse that leads us to perdition. You have stopped short in time, and have a noble career before you. You must find some kind, noble-hearted woman to assist you in bearing the honours which at present seem too heavy. They will sit lightly enough, when they are shared by a wife who loves you."

"That is out of the question," said Lance. "I shall never marry. If I had been born in the station you tell me I am to occupy, I might have stood a chance of winning a woman's love; but now, what have I to show that might justify her preference? Mohr! I will tell you what makes me so profoundly unhappy. There is only one woman in the world I care to please; and she is as much above me as the holy Madonnas I have often looked at in your cabin seem su-

perior to their humblest worshipper. In many respects, they reminded me of her. What hope can a wild, untaught smuggler like me, have of gaining the affections of Mary St. Erme?"

Mohr started, as the name, uttered with passionate emotion by Lance, fell upon his ear.

"Ah! you love *her*?" he said—" *La Belle Marie!* Pardon! I sometimes think, myself, she is like those saints—those Holy Virgins in my cabin. But take courage! If you have such a feeling in your heart, it is a purifying emotion. In time, it will make you worthy of her. There is nothing which such a love will not do for a man. It is like the worship we feel for the dead, the lost;—which some good men condemn— which must not be carried too far; but which yet infuses into our existence a diviner element. Listen! I had once a little daughter—her name was Mary. It has to me a thrice-hallowed sound since I lost her. Those carved images—my pictures—my beautiful schooner—ah! they all breathe to me her soft name. They are my Marys. Well, Lance!—this angel, my little daughter—the holy thing to me that hovers in the moonlight, as I walk the deck, and flits over the sea, in storms, to protect me—this long-lost, but not forgotten, sainted Mary—if I had her hand to bestow on a lover,

I would unhesitatingly give her to you rather than to any other mortal man. I might tell you to work out a long probation, but you would go through it worthily. In time, she should be yours."

The young lord looked up in his face gratefully.

"Herr Mohr! I thank you for this noble confidence. Had you a daughter such as you describe — a living Mary, equal to the being who for her brother's sake — perhaps, for some yet more sainted purpose — left her quiet home to share the dangers of your last passage — I might, at some future day, ask you to make good your words — in short, to be a father to me. As it is, I claim one proof of your friendship. I do not wish to remain here, to be stared at by these rustics. I shall not reside in England — at all events, not for many years; and the old Grange may, with my full consent, crumble to ruins, as it seems likely to do, unless steps which I shall never authorise be taken to prevent it. So let it rot! Another country must receive me until the unlucky past is forgotten. Foreign manners, foreign customs will be more agreeable to me than this English country life, and may cast a mantle over my glaring imperfections. Give me a passage in your vessel to Brittany."

"Willingly," said Mohr. "Mademoiselle

Reine will be glad of your company ; and, at her marriage, it is your part, as her nearest kinsman, to give her hand to Lieutenant St. Erme. Now, go — tell her she will find me ready to receive her on board La Belle Marie, and that time and tide will serve us for sailing at an early hour to-morrow. The sooner she embarks, the better.”

He wrung Lance's hand warmly, and, turning off sharply at the gate out of the avenue where they had been walking together, went at a quick pace through the woods towards the sea and cliffs.

CHAPTER XXI.

OVER the broad slopes of the Cornish moor, still wet with mist and rain, a silvery haze was stealing, as the late November moon whitened the broad tops of the evergreen hedges in the Rector's garden, cresting their shining leaves with sparks and shimmerings of lustre. Thundering in the distance, though the night was calm, there came upon the ear, at measured intervals, the boom of the great Atlantic waves, rolling into the caverns of the coast. This was one of the nights when the flood-tide filled those giant apertures, and swept away every token of man's labour which was left exposed to the tremendous force of the sea. In spite of their care, the Lezant fishermen and smugglers often found their boats drifting off, and their cellars filled with salt water, to the destruction of the miscellaneous stores of contraband goods, housed in darkness, to preserve them from the clutches of the Excise.

In the pale moonlight, along the level terrace walk in front of the Rectory windows,

Mr. St. Erme and his niece were walking slowly up and down. Mary was leaning on her uncle's arm, listening while he told her, more rationally than usual, of Richard's present hazardous undertaking. The time had arrived when her brother had justified himself in his uncle's estimation. He had sought out those influential friends of his father, who had striven — for the most part with ill success — to lighten the load of misfortune which had fallen on the convict's unhappy family. He found them still ready and eager to assist him in procuring a fresh inquiry into the circumstances connected with the murder of Captain Fleming, and the banishment of Colonel St. Erme. A full and free pardon for his father, should he be still in existence, might, he was assured, be depended upon. As a first step towards the elucidation of the mystery still enveloping the crime, he was furnished with a Secretary of State's warrant, and empowered to call upon the county magistrates to assist in the arrest of Jean Helier and any of the smugglers who might have taken part in the run formerly made upon the coast by the captain and crew of the *Nautilus*.

Mary's heart warmed towards the cold, silent guardian of her youth, when she saw how much he was changed and animated by Richard's success. Ten years seemed taken

from his age, his words flowed freely, and by his raised head and brightened eye, and at times in his curt, manly phrases, the girl recognised the effect of her young brother's buoyant, sanguine expressions and anticipations upon that usually despondent nature. Presently, however, Mr. St. Erme stood still, when they came to the end of the terrace walk — where the tall young cypress-trees on the grass, the cold white vases now empty of their summer flowers, cast their shadows beside his own and Mary's on the moonlit ground.

“On one point, Mary,” he said, “I cannot agree with you. Though I thank my Heavenly Father for the prospect which is opened, through Richard's exertions, of a complete vindication of your beloved parent's honour, my mind starts away from the conclusion to which you would wish to lead me. I do not join in the hope, natural in his children, that Edmund St. Erme, in the flesh, should revisit us again. There are, for men like him, like myself, sufferings which are worse than death. To these I would not expose him. Do not,” he added, hurriedly, as she strove to speak, “argue this matter with me. I know all you can say; but it does not convince me. This man, who is, you tell me, like that childish vision, which is

all you could summon up of your father—this foreign trader, whom your entranced imagination transformed into the likeness of one whom he perhaps faintly resembles—do you think that *I* should see in him that finished soldier and gentleman, whose slightest word and gesture was the very pink of courtesy and elegance? Impossible! Granted that in the house to which I sent you—in Fleming's death-chamber—this wandering stranger, your father's friend and co-exile, who appeared to you at dead of night, in answer to your summons, may have been the appointed medium through whom his voice reaches us; alas! this is to me the most convincing proof that he is in the incorporeal world of spirits!"

Mary looked up in his agitated face.

"Uncle!" she said, firmly, "do you think that we, his children, would not, in any disguise, know and recognise our father? Surely, you will not deny the affinity of our souls; or doubt that, without speech or language, our hearts must throb at his approach? Would those divine spirits, who guard the innocent, deceive us? Is that the answer our prayers deserved?"

"No, no!" said Mr. St. Erme, with agitation, "keep your childlike faith unspotted! Believe, since to do so makes you happy, that

you have seen and spoken with your father! I do not deny that it may be so. I cannot explain this mystery. I dare not, if I could, interpret it. There is a world around, above, and beneath us, into which, by casual glimpses, we are admitted;—and then, again, the curtain drops. We are shut in among our plants, our trees, our urns and vases; and they wear their own dark or light, airy or substantial forms, and are to us nothing more. The breeze that sighs in the thicket is nothing but the wind; the murmuring voice that spoke in our ear is again only the babbling of the brook. But, if we pass the limit set for us—ah, then, my child! we stand on prohibited ground. If we try to bring these shadowy phantoms into the glare of daylight, and strive to bind them with us to common daily tasks, and heap on them the sorrows of humanity, this load their finer spirits cannot bear. How do you think that he—your father—could endure the notoriety—the numberless annoyances which would assail his sensitive nature—refined, now, to its most spiritual essence? Even I could not bear it for him. This place, with its associations, is hateful to me; and I wait only to disburthen myself of the charge I have ill-supported, before I leave Lezant. The grave has closed over the past. Wherefore should

we seek to recall what is irrevocably gone? Better to be ourselves also forgotten."

Mr. St. Erme folded his arms, and, without bidding the young girl adieu, paced absently for some time his garden-walks; but the high evergreen hedges seemed to oppress him—the space to be too narrow; and passing through the gate under the hawthorn-trees, which were now gay with crimson berries, he found himself at once under the open sky that arched over the wide, unenclosed down.

He walked thoughtfully to the edge of the cliff, and, still agitated, stood looking over the brow on the black, jagged rocks, from which the tide was now receding. A strange thrill passed through his whole frame—that sensation which only one step and voice had ever sent to his heart—as the Dutch skipper, Jacob Mohr, came suddenly round the point towards him.

"Willkommen, lieber Herr! I was on my way to seek you at your house. Has the Fraulein reached it safely?" said the smuggler. "Are you satisfied that no harm has befallen her?"

"Yes," answered Mr. St. Erme. "Mary is at my house. She is well. She has been sufficiently protected."

He stopped, and remained for an instant struggling with his feelings, and striving to

catch a clearer glimpse of his companion; but Mohr stood with his face turned away from the moonlight, looking straight out to sea.

“ Yonder is my schooner !” he said. “ She is ready to sail, but I could not leave England for ever, without a word with you. Bref! it is soon said. How is it that I cannot find in your English language the sentence I require? It is this. Helier of the Grange, in dying, has confessed his guilt. Tell Made-moiselle St. Erme — tell the young Lieutenant, that their father was no murderer. Here is the written deposition signed by that villain.”

He placed in the clergyman’s hand a paper, which Mr. St. Erme received with deep emotion.

“ Ah, you are these children’s good angel !” he said, passionately. “ Let them see and thank you for your intervention. I have heard from Richard of the aid you have rendered him. Mary has told me of your warm interest and sympathy, and now you bring in your hand what renders all further investigation unnecessary. Let Edmund St. Erme’s children thank you for restoring to them their father !”

He caught hold of Mohr’s arm, and listened impatiently for the answer, which

came not in the voice that had sounded for twenty years in the ears of Reginald St. Erme, but in the deeper tones of the Dutch skipper.

“No! I cannot enter another English dwelling. It is against my rule that, to further the ends of justice, I have set foot in one. Now, I must sail away. *Leben sie wohl, Bruder!* Ah, it is one hard thing to do and say; but, on this Cornish moor, we never meet again. Yet this need not be our last parting,” he said, impressively, as he heard Mr. St. Erme’s deep sigh, and felt the detaining clasp of his hand. If I mistake not, this country has not of late years been pleasant to you. Your health requires change of climate and absolute rest. Tell the Herr Lieutenant and the gracious Fraulein that, if they wish ever again to see their friend, Jacob Mohr, they must cross the Channel. This is my last trip in *La Belle Marie* to England.”

Mr. St. Erme gazed after the retreating figure of the smuggler, as it passed out of view beyond the projecting headland. He then threw himself on the cliff; and, if any of his parishioners had gone by that solitary place, they would have been startled by the wild, passionate weeping, of the man usually regarded as devoid of sensibility. But no one came near him. The moonlight assumed that cold, dim colouring, which heralds

the approach of dawn. The stars faded out of the brightening sky. The sun rose and tipped the sharp edges of the Cornish tors with ruddy light, before he raised himself from the now dewy grass.

As he looked seaward, Mr. St. Erme saw a vessel, under press of canvas, working her way to the westward, and watched her slowly disappearing below the horizon. Never again would the rocks at the mouth of Lezant harbour admit within their threatening clasp the tall, tapering masts, and graceful sweeping proportions of *La Belle Marie*;—never would the shores ring again, as they had done, when *Lance Fleming* and her bold skipper brought the Dutchman's famous craft through the Devil's Grip.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE people of Lezant put their own interpretation upon the composure with which Mr. St. Erme received the intelligence of Jean Helier's hardy confession. They said the Parson was sure to know more about the dead than the living, and had heard the whole story from his brother's ghost, on the night when the dying sinner at the Grange acknowledged himself guilty of the crime for which Colonel St. Erme had undergone sentence of death — commuted to transportation for life, through the mercy of the Crown. Many versions of the tale went abroad, resembling each other in the principal feature — the Rector's personal communication with the spirit of the departed. None of his parishioners were familiar enough to question their pastor on the subject; but all were ready to believe a ghost story, however imperfectly authenticated.

Mr. St. Erme never again, however,

mounted the pulpit-stairs of Lezant Church. A representation was made to the Bishop of the diocese that the Rector's failing health would not allow of his continuing to officiate, and a substitute was appointed. Before many months were over Mr. St. Erme and his niece had left England, and were heard of only as wanderers and pilgrims, with no fixed abiding-place.

Richard St. Erme, when the cloud was removed from his prospects, resumed his family name, and soon rose in his profession. The confiscated property of the father was restored to the son, and a wish shown to make atonement, as far as it was possible, to the relatives of Colonel St. Erme, for his unjust punishment. Providence was still more Richard's friend, in rendering him the object, during his early period of obscurity, of Reine's passionate attachment; and the young naval officer never regretted, when fortune smiled upon him most, the years he had spent in Brittany.

At last, a rumour, which brought back many forgotten circumstances to the minds of men, was circulated through the hill-town, and on the quay at Lezant. The young Lord was married; and his bride was said to be the daughter of the banished man, Colonel St. Erme, and niece of the Rector of Lezant.

There were no bells to ring from that silent tower; and the old Manor-house belonging to the Boscawen demesne, and lying in the depth of the woods, had been long since deserted, and left to fall into ruins. Nevertheless, the healths of the young Lord and Lady Boscawen were cordially drunk at the thriving hotel kept by the Welsh landlord and his wife, at the lower end of the town. The old inn, which had not flourished under the superintendence of Andrew and his mother, gave no sign of rejoicing; but the tenantry were hospitably regaled, in the absence of the young nobleman, by the steward, who still managed the property.

Under the chestnut-trees on the banks of the Rance, Mary St. Erme's wedding banquet was spread. There was no lack of loving friends around her—no stint of earth's best blessings in her lot. Not to Reine only did it appear that nowhere else could be found such leafy coverts, green and flowery meadows, and bright clear waters, as those which lie beneath the old towers and spires of Dinan—her own Breton woods, and streams, and fields.

Round the Fontaine des Eaux, the peasants, in their blue blouses, with their straw hats and floating ribands, danced and feasted in the shade; keeping holiday in honour of

the generous English family who had settled among them, and half obliterated their strong provincial prejudices. Beyond the verdant banks and scarped crags of the river, where its waters widened into the Port of St. Malo — La Belle Marie, no longer a smuggling schooner, lay dressed with flags for the occasion, within view of the lately-renovated Château of St. Evremond, dismantled at the time of the Revolution. Captain St. Erme, the present possessor, had purchased the place from the municipality, into whose hands it had fallen ; and settled the property upon his wife, the only surviving descendant of its ancient owners.

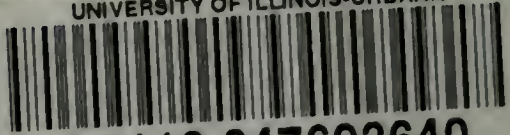
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LONDON:
STRANGEWAYS AND WALDEN, PRINTERS,
28, Castle St. Leicester Sq.





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